MY OLD COUSIN.



A NOVEL.

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.

MY OLD COUSIN;

OR,

A PEEP INTO COCHIN-CHINA.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

ROMANTIC FACTS, OR WHICH IS HIS WIFE? VERONICA, OR THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER, &c.

Τȣ̃ μὲν γὰρ γένος ἐσμέν.

ARATUS OF CILICIA.

We are of this man's family.

Thou art not of the fashion of these times.

SHAKESPEARE.

VOL. II.

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MY OLD COUSIN.



CHAPTER I.

What moment is there, in the life of man,
Fraught with such genuine bliss as that in which
We to our bosom press a much-lov'd friend,
A friend return'd, e'er our most sanguine hope
Durst image his appearance? AUTHOR'S MS.

OUR enthusiastic hero expatiated pretty copiously on the novelties which surrounded him, and declared himself thoroughly satisfied with his profession, but could not keep back a strong expression of regret, that the cruise from which he expected his first buds of laurel

rel merely turned out a tacking voyage in the Channel, succeeded by anchoring in Torbay.

He still flattered himself that the misunderstanding between Great Britain and Spain would not be hastily adjusted; and, as we all do when advocating a favourite point, ingeniously summoned every argument in behalf of it, without once adverting to innumerable floating rumours of an exactly contradictory tendency.

Nor was sweet Fanny by any means unnoticed, for to her he spoke with a tenderness plainly declaratory of the powerful dominion she held over his youthful heart.

Highly gratified with this communication from their darling, which was not the less acceptable, because, instead of

being

being in pursuit of a Spanish fleet, it left him riding safely in Torbay, the party now broke up, and once more left Mr. St. Paul and Mrs. Mary in undisturbed possession of their solitude at the Abbey of Napperton.

The old gentleman and lady had, however, been so long habituated to the lively society of Rodney, that they did not, as had been the case with them in former days, enjoy the solemn stillness of their ancient mansion, or think it sufficiently enlivened by the occasional visits of the *civil* Sharkem, or the more frequent attendance of their almost daily *Gazette*, Sympson, *alias* six-and-eightpence. Mr. and Mrs. William must now also visit them at dinner three or four times a-week; and if Fanny did not look in upon them every fine morning, a mes-

senger was sure to be dispatched to her papa's, in order to ascertain the cause of her neglect.

Rodney, with an attention which strongly evinced a grateful recollection of *home*, wrote very frequently, and always with the warmest encomiums on the service in which he was employed, but ever accompanied by a thousand regrets that his cruises were nothing more than simple coasting backward and forward between Torbay and Spithead.

At times he appeared quite despairing of active employment against an enemy; then, with the fluctuation of an English thermometer, he dispatched a few hurried lines, expressive of "a confirmed opinion that war was inevitable, and that they must sail in a few days—perhaps hours."

A great

A great promotion of naval officers which took place in September 1790 strongly corroborated Rodney's sanguine expectations; the notice in the newspapers for October, that seventy sail of the line* were in commission, confirmed them as decidedly as if this formidable fleet were under sailing orders, and an enemy's ships known to be awaiting them in the Channel.

Such was the impression made at Napperton and Marton by these alarming prognostics, that we may literally say "the voice of lamentation" was heard at both, and almost as loudly as if their favourite had received a severe wound, or undergone the amputation of a limb.

Mr. St. Paul renewed his self-accusations—the anticipations of Mrs. William daily

* *Vide* the diurnal papers of the period in question

daily increased in gloom—and, such is the force of example, the hitherto-blithe Fanny had no longer the meteors of her Rodney's future glory floating agreeably round her pillow.

To what sudden, what extraordinary changes we are liable, in our present state of existence! Often, when the cup of joy, crowned with its gayest wreaths, is at our lip, we tremble, and its precious ingredients are spilt upon the ground! Frequently too, when our patience seems exhausted, and our virtue sinking, "overwhelmed with grief," some "timely succour interposes," and we are saved from the sword, which appeared dropping on our head!

The latter is strikingly exemplified by what happened at this period to our acquaintances at Napperton Abbey; for,

as the murmuring party were venting their united complaints one dismal November evening in Mrs. Mary St. Paul's parlour, and making their remarks on the weathercock of an octagon tower, visible from the window, they were suddenly roused by the sound of an approaching carriage.

"What can it be?—who can it be?" were the exclamations to be expected at a place so seldom frequented by visitors.

Fanny bounded, with the agility of a young roe, to the cloistered entrance of the Abbey, in order to discover the cause of this unusual interruption; there was yet light enough (it was not more than half-past four o'clock) for her to distinguish objects pretty accurately.

The gate of the court flew open; a boy of Rodney's stature, covered with an im-

mense coat, which completely enveloped his figure, crossed to the front door, with a light and quick tread.

There was no time for conjectures, for the painfully pleasing vacillations of hope and fear; the door expanded on its hinges—an eye of recognition glanced on Miss Sharkem—a voice more welcome than the strains of sweetest music sounded in her ears, and exclaimed—"What, Fanny! my dear Fanny here? Oh, I am so delighted, so overjoyed! And how do my good cousins? and how do all at Marton?"

Fanny was under such astonishment that her tongue refused to articulate the longed-for answer—"*All's well!*" much more was she disqualified from explaining that Mr. and Mrs. William were visiting at the Abbey. She alone was able

to

to lead the way to Mrs. Mary's sitting-room, and give the welcome stranger an opportunity of making every agreeable discovery himself.

In a few minutes Napperton Abbey, from being a complete "house of mourning," was filled with the strains of joy. Mr. St. Paul's backgammon-board was deserted "in the twinkling of an eye," though he was on the very apex of triumph over his opponent Sympson—in short, to use an expression we may presume quite familiar to Rodney, "all hands were soon mustered" round him, and nothing seen or heard but salutations; the weathercock was no longer an object of attention, for of what importance were wind and weather, now the sailor had arrived in port?

The curtains were soon drawn; the

sofa wheeled to the fire, and the happy party, with wrapt attention, gazing on, or listening to the voice of him so lately deplored as lost, now so unexpectedly discovered.

To prove decidedly that the gratification of this moment was not confined to the regions of the parlour, every time the door opened, faces from the kitchen or servants'-hall were observed peeping to get a glimpse of, or probably a nod from the general favourite.

We can all, I should suppose, without difficulty call back to our remembrance the exhilaration of mind which ensued on returning to our earliest, dearest friends, after the first long-continued absence from home; and what moment of our life can we revert to when the bosom swelled with a more genuine rapture?

ture? Ours, as Gay says, was then "the sunshine of the mind;" inanimate objects, as well as the animated countenances which received us, had a share in exciting the delicious sensation—not a tree, or walk, a field, a rivulet, or a building, but awakened some pleasing recollection.

Every reader will therefore be able to understand what Rodney felt on beholding even the first faint outline which the thick atmosphere of a dull November evening afforded, as he drew near to Napperton Abbey; every one must consequently suppose the exuberance of spirits in which he passed the oft-trodden court, and entered the parlour of his ancient cousin, Mrs. Mary; I shall not then be accused of giving an overcharged delineation when I introduce

duce him with a face bright with every evidence of inward satisfaction: shall I meet with equal credence when I assert that this auspicious sunshine was soon, very soon, overcast by a cloud, is the question? And yet both assertions are alike well-founded, for a cloud of ponderous weight most certainly, in a very few minutes, dimmed the radiance of our juvenile hero's aspect: could I subpœna witnesses from the then existing occupants of Napperton Abbey, they would confirm beyond a doubt the accuracy of my statement, for the obscuration alluded to was marked by them all—marked by them too, strange as it may at first appear, without producing the slightest correspondent gloom: the fact is, they ascribed his change of countenance to a cause which they regarded rather

rather as a subject of rejoicing than affliction; and they soon had their surmises confirmed by Rodney's exclaiming—"We are paid off—the differences with Spain are settled! I have no chance to assist in giving the high and mighty dons a dressing!"

Great and general as were the ostensible symptoms of rejoicing produced by the "Gazette Extraordinary" which announced to the public an amicable arrangement of affairs between the courts of St. James and Madrid, there was not, I will be bound to declare, a family happier on the occasion than that of the old squire of Napperton. The bonfires kindled by his order levied a tremendous contribution on his ancient woods, and sent up their crackling blaze till a very late hour; and his cellars were so seriously

seriously drained of his famous October, that, late as it was in the season, it was considered indispensably necessary to venture on a fresh brewing, in order to keep up the general stock.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

Nescius auræ
Fallacis! miseri quibus
Intentata nites. HORACE, *Ode* V.

Alas! deceived by thy present calmness and serenity, oh, softly undulating waves! he dreams not of the trea cherous gale! Unhappy they to whom, whilst you are untried, you shine so temptingly! *Paraphrase.*

WEEK followed week, and yet the sun daily rose upon Rodney, and found him, in the strongest expression of the term, "a murmuring, discontented spirit;" his attention had been early directed to naval pursuits, and so indelible was the impression,

impression, that a life on shore, though surrounded by all the comforts of affluence and the smiles of genuine friendship, appeared insupportably insipid; he fancied himself too much of a sailor and a man to derive amusement from the once-highly-estimated *fleet on the fish-pond*, and resigned the command unreluctantly to a little boy, the son of his cousin's steward, who, probably from *his* warm descriptions, was smitten with an incurable mania for going to sea.

Hatchway, still in daily attendance at the Abbey, with a religious devotion to his profession, kept alive, we need not doubt, the ardour of his young friend by every ingenious expedient; and it was most likely principally owing to his suggestions that the junior St, Paul resisted the united entreaties of his mo-

ther,

ther, father, cousins, and even the interesting and beloved Fanny Sharkem, to apply at the Admiralty for a discharge from future services, which, in the time of peace, might probably have been procured without any serious difficulty; his invariable reply to this often-expressed desire was—"Inclination, as well as honour, binds me to my profession, and I cannot possibly relinquish it without having at least endeavoured to render myself an object of regard to my king and country."

On publications relative to the sea-service he pored indefatigably day and night, and his researches in this valued study were so ably seconded by Hatchway, that in a very few months he could describe, with the closest attention to minutiæ,

minutiæ, every important naval action which had occurred for many centuries, and could converse so scientifically on the subject as to appear, even in the estimation of experienced auditors, a professional rather than a theoretical seaman.

At length, after the lapse of nearly two years from the time when he called himself *laid up in port Napperton*, the papers of the day announced the preparation of an embassy to China, a country, however important its staple commodity has rendered it to this tea-drinking island, little known, from the peculiarly jealous character of its despotic government to the generality of Europeans.

"Oh that I could be attached, in any

way,

way, to this interesting expedition!" was the secret and daily wish of Rodney.

It was soon communicated to his tutor, the lieutenant, and almost as speedily published at Marton and the Abbey.

At first it met with a general opposition; but what will not perseverance effect, where the petitioner is a general favourite?

Rodney unceasingly pressed and entreated—Hatchway assiduously seconded the motion, and I am inclined to believe that owing to a suggestion of his it was eventually carried; the prevailing argument was no other than that Rodney might be indulged, without greater personal risk than awaited any sea-voyage, as there was sure to be no fighting.

Mr.

Mr. Sharkem's interest at the Admiralty was again resorted to, and once more successfully employed, for he very soon obtained an appointment for Rodney St. Paul on board the L——, of sixty-four guns, which was to have the honour of conveying the noble ambassador and his suite to their remote destination.

A daily-increasing diminution of sight prevented the old squire from attempting another journey to Portsmouth, and Mr. William's constant attendance on him was now so absolutely necessary, that on Hatchway alone devolved the task of witnessing Rodney's re-embarkation, which he, in the true log-book style of journal, communicated, not per telegraph, but per post, to the family at Napperton Abbey.

"At

" At half-past four *a. m.* anchored at the —— Hotel, Portsmouth: wind veering from N. E. to N. W.—weather somewhat hazy. All hands well.

" *Sept.* —. Turned out at eight *a. m.*—took an observation. No likelihood of sailing orders.

" At ten went on board the L——: like Rodney's berth and messmates; all the lads seemed true-hearted British tars, able enough, and if there had been a chance for the fun, willing enough to have licked the dons—none of your fair-weather gentlemen sailors, who had rather lubber it over a fireside at home, than risk their precious hulks on old ocean.

" 23d.—Rodney in high glee—wind changing to the right quarter.

" At

" At three, the wished-for signal-gun for all the officers and men on shore to repair on board.—Wish, from my soul, that one-legged Jack Hatchway could, somehow or other, have been spliced into the expedition, though no fighting in the way, and Jack not over and above fond of the tea-making gentry of Nankin.

" 25th.—Must sail to-day. Rodney came ashore at nine, *a. m.* Returned with him to the ship—overhauled, for the last time, his stores: nothing wanting but a few more cotton shirts—time enough to get them at a slop-shop—better than buying them of a ship's steward, who often cheats ten per cent.

" Shipped the shirts at noon—returned with the boy on board—took leave at two—and about five, *p. m.* the L——, accom-

accompanied by the H—— Indiaman, captain M——, and the I—— brig, for a tender, sailed in good style. Could perceive Rodney at the stern, waving his flag, *alias* a silk handkerchief, to me, which my book of signals interprets as good wishes for all friends in Yorkshire, the charming Fanny in particular.

" N. B. We toasted the pretty maid in a can of mother ——'s famous flip, at the Punchbowl, on Saturday night—that night—

> 'When all true British tars carouse,
> And drink to sweetheart, or to spouse.'

" 26th.—Entered baggage at the custom-house of the gallant Rodney coach—no seaman sails in any other vessel, if so be he can procure a berth in her; she seems tightly rigged—doubtless crew will

will prove sufficient to man her completely, for she is to be full *at all ends, cabin and steerage.*

"Hang it! can't get clear of Portsmouth harbour to-night. Wind and weather good enough, but head rather muddy; yet have sense enough left to know that the lad at the helm—and by jingo! I must steer—will be sure to run foul of quicksands, and them there sort of things of old Davy Jones's contrivance, without a head and brains on board."

The epistle whence these whimsical abstracts have been purloined reached Napperton Abbey, much to the satisfaction of its inhabitants, many days before the writer made his appearance there:

there: his head, I fear, continued muddy, and reason cloudy, too long to admit of his weighing anchor at the time originally fixed. He came, however, safe and well, and was sure to be welcome, since he had had the last look at Rodney, dear Rodney, and was never weary of talking of him, and prognosticating the credit he must eventually prove to the British navy.

Rodney's experience that his kind-hearted friend's passion for grog often interfered with punctuality in his appointments, suggested the necessity of forwarding letters by the post, independent of the packet forwarded by the lieutenant; and it was lucky he took this precaution, for it saved the feelings of his relatives from nearly a week of uncertainty and suspense.

In these letters he wrote with the strongest expressions of delight in every thing around him, and particularly of the anticipated gratification he looked forward to, in a country so completely new to him as China and its dependencies.

"The Chinese," observed he, "are such a jealous kind of people, that we know but little more of them than that they furnish us with an article which forms an important feature in two of our daily meals.

"Good Hatchway tells me that I must prepare for seeing real creatures as curious and as much unlike ourselves as the visionary beings I have read of with such rapture in the 'Arabian Nights Entertainments.' I wish heartily I may, for I think I should not be afraid of the

genii,

genii, and I am quite sure I should like, of all things, to behold a lady so beautiful as the 'Princess of China,' for she would be like my dear little Fanny, and I should fancy myself in England.

"The mandarins, you know, I am already acquainted with, for Mrs. Mary St. Paul used to have them nodding away, as Hatchway would say, at the rate of I don't know how many knots an hour, on her mantlepiece. If the living ones have such strange motions, I am afraid I shall laugh in their faces, and perhaps affront the old gentlemen.

'But never mind,' my old friend the lieutenant observes, 'never mind that, Roddy; foreigners never take any thing much amiss that we John Bulls do or say—'*cause why*,' to use his very words,

'they know, that if they give us an angry shot, we should pour in a broadside, and sink their lubberly hulks at once.'

"I mean to write whenever I can, and fancy I shall have many opportunities of getting my letters convoyed homeward, from the multiplicity of ships we shall doubtless speak with at sea."

CHAP-

CHAPTER III.

For foreign ports and lands unknown,
Lo, the firm sailor leaves his own;
Obedient to the rising gale,
Unmoors his bark, and spreads his sail,
Defies the ocean and the wind,
Nor mourns the joys he left behind.

COTTON.

THE first communication which Rodney had it in his power to make to his eagerly-expectant friends in England, was dated off Madeira, Friday, October the 12th, and from it I shall in-

dulge my readers with the following abstracts :—

"I have been longing to tell you how I am going on, ever since we lost sight of Spithead; but till this day have not had a certain opportunity of forwarding my letter.

"Here we arrived yesterday, in forty-four feet water. The view of Madeira is most delightful. I hope, before we again put to sea, to be able to give you some account of the interior of the island.

* * * *

"Lord M—— went ashore, at the invitation of the British consul. In compliment to him the ship's company manned

ned the yards, which is the grandest sight you can conceive; and this you will believe, when I tell you, that in such cases every yard of the ship is covered by seamen, in their best apparel, even to the main-topgallant-royal.

"13th.—I have now been on shore: I went in the suite of Mr. A——. The landing-place is most extraordinary—steppings are cut up a steep rock, and wind to a communication with the high road to Funchal. During our short journey thither, we met with a building which I should have guessed to have been any thing rather than a church, had not a cross pointed it out to us as such. The inside was crammed with images and pictures, I suppose highly esteemed by good Catholics, for we found many of them on their knees

 before

before them; but I did not regard them or their 'holy house,' as I heard some one call it, half so much as the delightful view of the country, both above and below. I wish Fanny was here with her pencil, to sketch it—perhaps she would introduce her friend Rodney as a figure in the landscape.

"Pray tell her, that although she cannot, agreeable to my wishes, be transported hither, to delineate these delightful prospects, she may yet oblige me by exerting her delightful talent in painting her own picture, and sending it to me by the first packet from England which takes out letters for China. She once drew Hatchway to the life, and, I think, my dear good old cousin and Six-and-eightpence.

"If my genius enabled me to take like-

likenesses, I am sure I would not ask this favour, for I could then make her portrait a correct one, as I have every feature of her sweet face, almost as much before me as if I were looking at it.

"You never witnessed any thing half so funny as the carriages here: I remember reading of Don Quixote's being sent home from one of his entertaining sallies in a cage, and I thought of him the moment I cast eyes on a lady, riding out for the benefit of the air, as we entered Funchal: her vehicle was covered with a net, and supported on poles, which were supported by four athletic men.

"Conveyances of a similar description were waiting, like a stand of coaches in London.

"We went to a celebrated convent of

ladies, who talked pretty fast to the gentlemen, through their grates, and, I thought, looked as if they would have had no objection to have followed them to the ship. They gave us a great many very beautiful toys of their own manufacture: I shall preserve my share of them for Fanny."

His next letter bore date from the island of Teneriffe, where they anchored October the twenty-first. His simple remarks upon its celebrated peak shall be all, from this communication, with which I shall trouble my perusers:—

"In compliance with my earnest desire, I was one of those fortunate enough

enough to ascend this wonderful and justly-celebrated mountain. It is visible at the distance of more than a hundred miles, and certainly forms one of the most striking objects imagination can conceive.

"The first ascent is rich in corn-fields and vineyards, and ever verdant with woods, which never lose their brilliant green foliage, but when they drop it off to give immediate room for new leaves.

"Soon after this perennially summer-scene—now you must not think I am beginning thus early to make use of the traveller's licence, for I assure you I am speaking the exact truth—we came to regions where never vegetable grew, but where ice and snow lie on every side, in immense piles, which have never

been dissolved, from the foundation of the world.

"What makes this eternally-wintry waste more extraordinary is, that we had not long passed it before we reached an immense cauldron, which vomits flames, and emits smoke continually; and I should have thought the heat necessarily proceeding from this inextinguishable fire would have melted all the snow in the world, rather than have allowed it to remain unchanged on its very bosom.

"We rode upon mules, which must be the surest-footed creatures in the world, or they never could have conveyed us safe over such dangerous roads. We used neither whip nor spur, but the unfortunate animals, in my opinion, were no gainers by this circumstance, as they were

were urged forward by followers, armed with pointed instruments, which they applied pretty liberally to such beasts as displayed any symptoms of refractoriness or fatigue.

"This interesting excursion occupied two days and two nights, and so cold was the region in which we were obliged to sleep, that we could not do without our great-coats and a warm fire, though sheltered from the external air by a tent."



The letter which succeeded that from Teneriffe was begun on the eighteenth of December, and described, at full length, all the absurd and troublesome ceremonies which take place on crossing the line—of course a fruitful subject to a boy

a boy of Rodney's years and turn of mind.

As no immediate opportunity occurred of dispatching this amusing composition, it set forward for the island of Great Britain, accompanied by another sheet, descriptive of the richness of coast and beauty of prospect presented on casting anchor in the delightful harbour of Rio Janeiro, on the first of December, where they fell in with the Hero, of London, a whale ship, from the South-sea fishery, bound homeward.

As Rodney continued to write perseveringly, day after day, in a journal-like form, he was always prepared with a packet for dear England, whenever a chance of sending it thither fell in his way. Such a one did not, however, happen, after clearing Rio Janeiro, until the

the month of March, 1793, when they entered Batavia roads, in the island of Java, and the capital of all the Dutch settlements in the East Indies.

Of this large and populous city he wrote at considerable length; but I shall satisfy myself with merely exhibiting the following short quotation :—



"It is easily seen, from the first view of this very curious city, that it is of Dutch extraction, for it bears a most striking resemblance to the towns I have read and heard of in Holland : the streets are centered by canals, and the houses glare with red paint, which would seriously offend the eye, if they were not in general seen through rows of trees, bright with the richest green.

"I went

"I went last night, with young Mr. S——, to the theatre, and though I understood not one word the players said, was extremely amused: luckily the pieces were both pantomimic, of which the dialogues are never very interesting, so that the sight was every thing, and *that* we enjoyed quite as well as the best Dutch scholar in the house,

"I shall rejoice when we again weigh anchor, for the heat is intolerable, and the filth of the streets renders it quite dreadful to walk through them. Instead of so many Europeans dying from this shocking climate, *I* wonder that *any* live."

Much to the gratification of his friends in England, these repeated communica-

tions

tions had always reached their intended destination in safety; and, in many instances, so favourable had been wind and weather, that they had come to hand, even before they could be reasonably expected: ill, therefore, were the anxious families of Marton and Napperton prepared for the grievous trial of passing week after week, month after month, without receiving a single ship-letter. The last which came to them was dated May 1793, and announced the safe arrival of the embassy in Turon Bay, Cochin-China.

It had been forwarded to Europe by a Portuguese brig, and bore the stamp of Lisbon. It was written in high spirits, and concluded with the welcome intelligence that the next time he wrote would be from Mettow, or some other

port

port of the Chinese empire: but, alas! no such gratifying notification reached the East Riding of Yorkshire.

For the first few weeks after they had begun to look with eager eyes into the letter-bag from the market town, they consoled each other with the remark, that "unfavourable weather had doubtless prevented the L—— from completing her voyage by the time expected." Again they argued, that "the next morning, or the next week, would relieve their suspense."

But the morning came and went; the next week passed without presenting a line from abroad.

The postman blew his horn at the gate, day after day, month after month, and still not an atom of information of or from Rodney.

In

In this dreadful state of suspense and anxiety lingered out the time, until the newspapers informed the public of lord M——'s safe arrival at Pekin, and the probability his reception gave birth to, that the embassy would be eventually successful: this, it is true, was necessarily unaccompanied by any individual notice of Rodney; but still it was not wholly destitute of consolatory influence, for it proved the safety of the fleet in which he had sailed—he had not then suffered shipwreck; his letters had probably been entrusted to vessels which were detained by adventitious circumstances; had he been dead, or any terrible disaster befallen him, a record of his fate must surely have found its channel to Europe.

What a blessed ingredient in the heterogeneous

terogeneous potion of life is hope! by its friendly injunctions we cling to the smallest twig, and, whilst it survives, never feel ourselves completely undone. The poet Young beautifully observes—

"Hope, like a cordial, innocent though strong,
Man's heart at once inspirits and serenes."

But for this dispensation of a beneficent Providence, what must have become of the St. Paul family, devoted, as they individually were, to their darling Rodney?

CHAP

CHAPTER IV.



——————One gleam of light
Did sweetly cheer the ev'ning of my days.
——————He was the kindest prop
That age did ever rest on—he is gone,
What should I live for now?

JOANNA BAILLIE.

SOME weeks after the announcement of the embassy's arrival in China, it occurred to Hatchway that a messmate of Rodney's was a native of York; he fortunately recollected the young man's name, and on imparting the circumstance

stance to Mr. St. Paul, was commissioned by him to take a journey to the last-mentioned place, in order to discover the sort of information from Asia which had reached the friends of the youth in question.

The family on whom Hatchway was requested to call in York received him most graciously; and from their countenances announced decidedly, that if they had heard at all from their cadet in China, the account must have been favourable.

When, however, the particular cause of their visitor's intrusion was declared, he could perceive a material alteration; and this was too soon accounted for, by their presenting to him for perusal a paragraph in their very last letter,

which

which involved the fate of the object of his care in the most perplexing mystery.

"On the seventh of June," said the letter, "the captain sailed in the cutter, to take soundings in the bay, accompanied by seven of the crew, and, from his particular and earnest petition, a youth of about the age of thirteen, of the name of St. Paul, a native of our county, was allowed to join them. As this party returned not to the ships at the time expected, much anxiety prevailed on board respecting their fate.

"A boat was dispatched up the river, to look after them, and afford assistance if required; but it returned with the distressing intelligence, that they had been surprised by the jealous natives, and

and carried off as prisoners to the capital city, *Hué Foo.*

"This information was corroborated from the shore, by messengers from several mandarins of rank and consequence, who ascribed the transaction to our captain's not confining himself to the taking of soundings, but at the same time presuming to survey and make plans of the coast, proceedings which excited the strongest alarm in the minds of the ignorant inhabitants, who doubtless imagined we were come to them with hostile intentions, and probably meditated a descent upon their country.

"As Cochin-China is tributary to the Chinese empire, and sends an annual ambassador to the parent court, we knew not how this awkward affair might be repre-

represented, and whether it would not eventually have a very unpleasant influence on the fate of a mission which had cost Great Britain an immense sum, and the success of which was highly important to her interests.

"My lord M——, through the medium of Mr. N——g, a Chinese interpreter, endeavoured to explain every thing in the most satisfactory manner, and at length, with infinite difficulty, procured the liberation of the prisoners; but the captain and his seven men returned without poor St. Paul, of whom they can give no other account, than that, whilst they were professionally employed in the bay, he went on shore, and at the time they were seized, was not in sight; nor could they, by dint of the most minute inquiries, learn what had

 become

become of him: even the highest authority was exerted to ascertain his fate, and yet without success."

When we consider the nature of the information which lieutenant Hatchway gleaned by his journey to the ancient metropolis of Yorkshire respecting our friend Rodney, we cannot for a moment suppose that he returned to Napperton Abbey with a very smiling countenance; he looked indeed most woe-begone—perhaps more so than even a person of finer feelings might have done, which at first view may appear somewhat paradoxical; but, be it remembered, that our in many respects worthy lieutenant had an invincible propensity for *grog*—and grog, dear reader, will, *in some*

cases,

cases, indue the most masculine spirit existing with the softness of that tender sex who Chaucer says are born " to spin and weep."

As evidence to this extraordinary fact, I do hereby seriously and solemnly declare, that I (Mr. Author) have, in more instances than one, beheld men whose rugged exterior promised nothing less than the briny floods of sensibility; yet, whilst under grog's imperial dominion, blubber forth their griefs as violently as a beaten schoolboy.

Hatchway was, I am sorry to record, on his arrival at the Abbey gates, brimful of his darling beverage, consequently just in cue for a display of violent sorrow. We must not, however, ascribe his tears wholly to the influence of his *familiar spirit*—they would have flown,

 though

though not so strongly resembling an impetuous torrent, if he had tasted nothing stronger during the preceding four-and-twenty hours than the simple element—they would, I again say, have flown, for he had a heart, and that heart felt acutely, that the being he most loved on earth was in all human probability lost to him for ever! an idea embittered with the terrible reflection that to his suggestions, in a great degree, might be attributed the misfortunes of the youth whom he lamented.

"Poor fellow! poor Rodney!" were all the words he could articulate, in answer to the eager looks and interrogations which assailed him from every quarter, on entering Mrs. Mary St. Paul's parlour.

"Have we then lost him?"—"Is he to

return

return to us no more?" or expressions of similar import, burst spontaneously from every mouth.

The gushing tears and loud sobs of Hatchway interfered for many minutes with further explanation; and when he at length attempted it, his ideas were in such confusion that it was quite impossible for him to make out any thing like a plain case. In fact, all he could say amounted to little more than repetitions of his original exclamations.

"We shall make nothing of him to-night," said Mr. William, in a low voice; "so we might as well postpone inquiring into our unfortunate boy's fate until to-morrow; he will then be able to relate minutely every thing that he has heard."

"But, my dearest love," cried Mrs.

William, who clung for support to her husband, "endeavour, for Heaven's sake! to elicit from him if our poor boy be living: the bare knowledge of his existence, however circumstanced, will enable us to survive the tedious interval of suspense which must elapse before we are possessed of particulars."

Mr. William reciprocated the feelings of his beloved wife; but he dreaded the answer which might follow the direct interrogation, whether Rodney were still to be numbered with the living?

"Yet," argued he, within his own bosom, "it will be better to know the worst as speedily as possible, for what certainty can lacerate our bosoms more dreadfully than the varied tortures of conjecture to which we are now condemned?"

"Dear Hatchway," cried he, taking the hand of the poor lieutenant, "we cannot bear to see you thus agitated. Allow me, my excellent fellow, to go with you to your chamber; rest is absolutely necessary for you, after your fatigue of body and mind. At present we will not trouble you with any other inquiry than if, from what you have already said, we are to conclude our darling Rodney is no more?"

Hatchway was momentarily endued with the faculty of utterance.—"No, no!" answered he; "God above forbid! but——" and his memory seemed to fail, "but—but——I can't tell—I don't know——they did not plainly say;" and again he relapsed into a boisterous paroxysm of grief.

Mr. William took his arm, and a bed-

candle; but with the not uncommon obstinacy of inebriety, he would not move an inch from the place.

"I know," stammered he, with no very distinct pronunciation, "that I am a good deal cut——but I can't help it, upon my soul, I can't help it!——I drank, I can assure you, to drown care for poor Rodney—Rodney, the best, ay, the very best lad that ever sailed!" Once more he wept and sobbed most audibly.

Intoxication, like insanity, cannot be managed without recourse to stratagem; Mr. William's parental anxiety did not deprive him of this recollection, nor take away the power of usefully employing the necessary art.

"My good friend," resumed he, in a conciliating tone, "don't you perceive

how

how dreadfully this violent expression of your grief affects our worthy relations, Mr. St. Paul and Mrs. Mary?"

"God bless them both—and you all!" cried Hatchway; "I would not hurt a hair of any of your heads, for all the wealth old ocean holds in her lockers below. Yes, yes, I'll turn into my berth, and snivel alone."

Having finished this sentence, he caught the offered arm of his friend, and staggered off, repeating all the way he went—"Poor Rodney! poor Rodney! drunk or sober, nobody shall ever catch Jack Hatchway saying that old George had ever a better lad than thee sailed in his navy. We shall never clap eyes on the like of thee, this side the day when all hands shall be mustered by sound of the last trumpet."

 Those

Those at all familiar with the manners of persons in poor lieutenant Hatchway's condition, will believe me when I assert that more than an hour elapsed, after Mr. William had attended him to his chamber, before he could disengage himself from the pressure of his hand, and make his escape to the afflicted family party below stairs.

In other circumstances, the incoherences to which he had been witness might not altogether have been unproductive of amusement; for, however strongly we may reprobate a vice temporarily destructive of that reason which distinguishes man from the brute creation, yet the most serious cannot always avoid laughing at its absurdities. In the instance of Mr. William St. Paul, amusement from surrounding objects

was completely out of the question; for though his eye unavoidably encountered the things which fell in its way, his ear admitted intelligible sounds, and by words he had the power of attempting to persuade the lieutenant to quiescence; in reality, " one object only swam before his sight."

Ask yon recently-bereaved mother, who is bending over the untimely urn of her favourite, perhaps her only child, if I am delineating unnaturally?—she will tell you that though at times she is apparently occupied by the avocations of life, her soul and mind are exclusively filled with one dear image, which, to use expressions similar to those Shakespeare puts into the mouth of the unhappy Constance, " walks up and down with her, speaks to her, looks upon

her," and, in one word, whether sleeping or waking, seems her inseparable companion.

In all situations, where the imagination of man is left floating on the rough sea of conjecture, nothing resembling sound repose can be expected; poor Rodney's assembled friends at Napperton Abbey could not then hope for the soothing influence of sleep on the night when they had been listening to the alarming, though certainly inconclusive, because "half-told tale" of the lieutenant.

Unfortunately, his morning representations were not at all more encouraging than their incomplete predecessors—nay, they even shed a darker gloom, for they added his almost positive opinion that nothing short of Rodney's having met with

with some fatal accident could account for his not returning to the captain's cutter.

CHAP-

CHAPTER V.

The woman is a worldling, all complete—
Can smile on this hand, give a frown on that;
And then she has the all-prevailing art
To flatter in so siren-like a tone.

J. L. H.

In a very short time the distressing anxiety which involved every member of the St. Paul family became pretty generally known throughout their neighbourhood, and was quite as generally commiserated, for the object of their solicitude was an universal favourite.

Mr.

Mr. Sharkem, as might be expected, was neither last nor least frequent in presenting himself and his " soft flowing" periods of condolement to the residents at Napperton Abbey; nor was he by any means least welcome to the ancient squire.

Perhaps, and I am inclined to credit the conjecture, he was even more eagerly listened to than Sympson, Hatchway, or even the parents of the lost boy themselves; for whilst they, with the too general despondency of real distress, touched the subject of their affliction with that sombre pencil which affords not to the drawing the relief of hope, Sharkem, as a dexterous pleader, contrived the peroration of his address should keep alive a notion that Rodney still survived, and, by some of those extraordi-

nary

nary turns of fortune which often distinguish the lives of Asiatic adventurers, would eventually be restored to his English friends.

Other reasons, and those pretty cogent ones, may likewise be advanced, for the estimation in which our acquaintance the solicitor was held by old Mr. St. Paul. Be it remembered, he was the father of Fanny, who, as the best beloved of Rodney, had succeeded, *nem. con.* to his place at the Abbey, and was become almost, if not to the full, as great a favourite as the little sailor had ever been. Then again he had connexions in town, through whom intelligence might probably be obtained of Rodney, the expectation of which rendered his visits at Napperton always acceptable; for, whenever his approach was observed,

the

the squire sanguinely flattered himself he would prove the bearer of good news.

A journey to London, which Sharkem had occasion to take about this time (the entire expences of which *several* of his clients individually defrayed, for he had the prudent money-making habit of killing many birds with one stone), was, by the favouring gale of side winds, wafted into Mr. St. Paul's ears, as entirely undertaken on his account, and of course regarded as proof positive of most disinterested attachment.

Unfortunately his researches threw not the faintest glimmering of light on the fate of little Rodney; every communication, indeed, in which he had been noticed, seemed to settle it decidedly that he had come to an untimely end.

Sharkem,

Sharkem, however, who kept in mind what our celebrated bard says on the subject of unwelcome intelligence—

> "The first bringer of unwelcome news
> Hath but a losing office; and his tongue
> Sounds ever after as a sullen bell,
> Remember'd tolling a departed friend,"

contrived to finish his representations to the squire with something to the following effect:—

"But, my dear, worthy, excellent sir, there is no such thing as knowing, fixing, limiting, bounding, or circumscribing the ways, purposes, designs, and ends of a Providence, or superintending Power, that is ever working, acting, or doing for our good, interest, and advantage.

vantage. Rodney, I feel assured, lives; and you, the best, and kindest, and tenderest of friends and relatives, will yet be benefited, blessed, and gratified by receiving within the boundaries, precincts, and liberties of your ancient and accustomed dwelling-place, called, known, or described by the name or appellation of Napperton Abbey, the object, I may add the deserving object, of your present care, anxiety, and solicitude."

For whatever purposes these encouraging addresses were meant, and however they might afford a temporary relief, yet in time they ceased, like other stimulants, to produce the desired effect. "Hope deferred," says an inspired writer,

ter, "maketh the heart sick." This was exemplified in one respect in the case of old Mr. St. Paul, for he became completely "*sick*," or, in other words, despairing of reviving information from Asia; but he was not in the same proportion sick of his soothing friend Sharkem's company—that neighbour was armed at all points against exciting such a malady. *Imprimis*, he was indefatigable, late and early, in every kind of attention; then he had an able coadjutrix in the person of his interesting daughter Fanny, who possessed that fascinating tenderness peculiarly acceptable to aged persons, and a promptitude to serve, which seemed to anticipate their wants and wishes before they had time to express them.

To

To aid in her spouse's grand design, for a design he certainly had, not a little inimical to the interest of the family at Marton, Mrs. Sharkem, "the worthy partner of his greatness," was now occasionally summoned to the Abbey; in any other case but hers, admission would not have been very easy there to a stranger.—Now don't seem incredulous of this declaration, reader, for I assure you, though the wife of their friend and solicitor, Mrs. Sharkem, was, until this period, known little more than by name to old Mr. St. Paul and his sister, and may therefore be, with due attention to correctness, denominated a stranger, and might have still continued so, had she not been "so tenderly, delicately, exquisitely organized," that

that Sharkem began to fear an entire separation from the darling Fanny might eventually prove injurious to her health and spirits.

To shut up these affectionate apprehensions in his own bosom would never have averted the dreaded evil; he must publish them, or perhaps endanger the life of his precious wife; and to whom could he vent his apprehensions so properly as to Mrs. Mary St. Paul, who, though a spinster, had the highest possible respect for maternal feelings?

The consequence was all that Sharkem desired—more, certainly, than he could reasonably expect from a first attack: his lady was invited to Napperton Abbey, received with marked kindness, and begged to repeat her visit whenever

whenever she felt inclined to see her daughter.

"My dear, worthy madam," was the solicitor's reply to Mrs. Mary, when this important invitation was given, "you are truly, and indeed too good, too attentive to me and mine. But we must not, must not permit, and allow, and suffer you to inconvenience, incommode, and fatigue yourself by receiving mistress Sharkem: no, no—however desirable and advantageous it would be to her, it must not be; however much and eagerly she longs for, and covets an opportunity of thanking you for your boundless goodness to our child, *it must not be!* I know your objection, nay, dislike to the reception of strangers; mistress Sharkem must not, therefore, be intruded upon you;

suffice

suffice it, that our Fanny rides a little more frequently to her mother's abode, residence, or habitation."

Mrs. Mary St. Paul reiterated her invitation.

Mr. Sharkem swelled his catalogue of objections to its acceptance; but he was *obliged* eventually to yield to the ancient gentlewoman's mandates; and, as I have before observed, Mrs. Sharkem was ushered, in due form, into the frequently-mentioned parlour, or *sanctum sanctorum,* if you please, of the amiable spinster of the Abbey.

On introducing a new character or acquaintance, it is not generally considered enough to say, "this is Mr. or Mrs. such a one;" we are mostly required to enter into the minutiæ of birth, parentage, qualifications, and *peculiar* circumstances,

stances, if we hope to insure any thing like a favourable *entrée*. Mrs. Sharkem is *quite new* to *you*, my dear reader—*ergo*, you will expect, and you shall not, I promise, be disappointed, that I prologue her into your presence.

Be it known then, to all whom it may concern, that Mrs. Frances Sharkem was the daughter of a tradesman in town, who, like too many of his thoughtless brethren, fell into the fatal error of making his expenditure far exceed his profits; insolvency, in such cases, generally follows. He felt not, however, its galling effects, for, at the moment when his name was about to be gazetted in the bankrupt-list, his life was cut short by an apoplectic fit.

His wife had been dead some years;

poor Frances and two sisters consequently became orphans, without a farthing, or any other prospect than a parish maintenance and education, unless it could be elicited from a distant relative in Yorkshire, who was a flourishing tradesman and a bachelor; he was applied to: the children, in the meanwhile, were deposited in the common receptacle for paupers, the workhouse.

The answer from the old kinsman was favourable; and, in obedience to it, the young folks were forwarded "*per waggon*," to the north, and met with a far more cordial reception than might have been expected to await any *parcel of goods* which could not be turned to *immediately* profitable account.

The shopkeeper had two widowed sisters,

sisters, of small independent property, who resided near him; with them he held a privy council on the subject of his recent importation, and it was then and there agreed, that *as the children were received,* they *must* be decently supported; each of the charitable matrons took the charge of one of them.

Frances, most fortunately for herself—I may say fortunately in the strongest sense of the expression, for never slavery was more severe than the situation of her sisters, whose patronesses studied the "*art of tormenting*" so successfully, that they drove their respective *protegées* to accept the first offers that were made them of matrimonial protection, and then were loud in exclaiming against their imprudent connexions, and forward behaviour.

 "Only

"Only think," was their mutual complaint, "how ungrateful these hussies have been to us, after taking them from a workhouse, and bringing them up like ladies," to leave us thus, in the decline of life, and at the very moment when the debt they owe might have been so properly cancelled!"

Frances's guardian, though not such an adept in afflicting as his sisters, certainly had his ways of throwing thorns into her path; and, but for her very accommodating temper, they would have festered in their lodgment: her generally-successful method of resisting them (which I record for the benefit of dependents of every sort, from the domestic chaplain, not allowed to take wine with his patron's daughters, to the humble governess, who must stand whilst

her

her mistress is *giving audience)* was, by declaring in words, or by the most conciliating actions, that she was ready to do any thing, and every thing that could be required of her; and this self-denying system she extended even to the conquering her *first love*, a task not generally considered easy, particularly where the object of it has "wisdom and worth," and every other recommendation, excepting (alas, sad deficit!) weight of metal: and for all this self-command she had *her reward*, if *money* could present it to her, for Sharkem (who had the disposal, on good landed security, of her relation's thousands, and consequently knew "to *within one penny of what he was worth*") offered, and, by mandamus from the higher powers, was accepted.

The education of Mrs. Sharkem had been so far attended to, that she was early sent, as day-scholar, to the principal female seminary of the place, though she certainly studied there to some disadvantage, for; to tell the truth, she was rather looked down upon, as tradesmen's young ladies will be invariably, by little squires' daughters, and such sort of gentry, though at the same time their papas' Christmas accounts with the parents of the children they are *taught* to despise are not very regularly liquidated.

The governess too, in compliment, no doubt, to the prejudices of her lady-pupils and their mammas, did not exert *all* her energies in forwarding the accomplishment of so insignificant a personage as the woollendraper's niece.

But

But Fanny was not a girl to be kept in the background: the same passive obedience which smoothed her way to the good graces of her old relation, enabled her, in time, to convert into friends those who had been originally most prominent in insulting her; and this so far influenced the mistress of the establishment in her favour, that if she quitted not the school, in the strongest sense of the term, *finished*, she had certainly acquired a smattering of all things, and was clever enough to make as great a show off with her "little learning," as many who had drank much longer and "deeper of the stream."

As Mrs. Sharkem, she was called upon and noticed to the utmost extent of her wealthy cousin's wishes: and the elevation to which she was now raised, it

was generally believed, confirmed her *sole heiress* to the old man's hoards, though her sisters, equally near to him, were almost in absolute want.

But such is the way of the world: the miser, who by meanness and the extremest parsimony has acquired a fortune, almost invariably selects the least indigent members of his family for his heirs and legatees.

Trained in necessity's trammels to the arts of servility, they were perfectly understood by Mrs. Sharkem, and invariably practised whenever there appeared the remotest chance "for effect."

On the venerable spinster of Napperton Abbey they were played off pretty liberally, and with complete success; and this will not be wondered at, when we consider how dulcet are the notes of

flattery,

flattery, and that when they appear, as they would do unquestionably in the present instance, as the ebullitions of gratitude, gratitude for favours lavished on a beloved child, they must be irresistibly fascinating.

The increasing influence of the Sharkems at the Abbey was, as may be naturally concluded, looked upon by Mr. William St. Paul with something of a jealous eye; he well knew the insinuating ways of the man of law, and trembled lest the inheritance of Napperton, to which he had a very fair claim, as next of kin, should be diverted from its natural channel by his manœuvres.

The reports of old Sympson greatly strengthened these pardonable apprehensions, for he announced the making of a new will by the old squire; and

from the gleeful countenance of Sharkem on the occasion, he augured that it must be favourable to his interests.

Remonstrance, on the part of Mr. William, even if he had decidedly ascertained a just foundation for his fears, would have been a dangerous and improper experiment, for his old cousin had unquestionably a disposing power over his possessions; all he could do, therefore, was to continue his visits and attentions at the Abbey, and manifest every possible design of obliging.

Nor had he or Mrs. William any reason to complain of a cool reception, or any falling off from former kindness, on the side of the squire or his sister; if any sort of change could be observed, it was even favourable to the hopes of eventually inheriting, for if they made

not their appearance at least every other day, their absence was complained of as a grievous disappointment.

Fanny Sharkem, it is true, was retained entirely at the Abbey, and noticed there with all the distinction of a favourite child.

"But then," argued Mr. William, "is not this in compliment to our poor Rodney, who so tenderly loved the dear girl? and can we expect less than that she should be remembered with some considerable bequest, under my old cousin's will? This, my dear, is cause sufficient for Sharkem's gleeful countenance—the estate will, in the end, vest in me, or my children, depend upon it; and I am sure I shall not, by any means, reluctantly discharge whatever Fanny may have left to her. I love her, and I

am sure you love her too, quite as a daughter."

If silence could be interpreted as consent to her husband's suggestions, we may conclude Mrs. William believed them well-founded, for she opposed them not by a single word; but, for all this, she was not by any means well at ease within herself, or at all confident that Sharkem had not more extensive views on Mr. St. Paul's property than a mere legacy for his daughter Fanny; and of this she became daily more and more suspicious, from observing that overstrained obsequiousness of manner on the side of the senior Sharkems towards her and her family, which the artful generally practise on those whom they intend to injure. That the elegant Sotheby thought somewhat similarly with

Mrs.

Mrs. William St. Paul, is plain from the following expressions in his *Zamorin*, &c.

> "————————The injurer
> Can smile on whom he wrong'd, and calmly tender
> His hand in pledge of friendship."

CHAP-

CHAPTER VI.



Along the gentle slope of life's decline
She bent her gradual way, till, full of years,
She dropp'd like mellow fruit into the grave.

Dr. Porteus

But what, alas! availed it that Mrs. William St. Paul thus accurately penetrated the designs of her enemies, when, from an apprehension of offending the old squire, she durst not venture on representing to him what she considered their real characters; she was therefore doomed to be a dumb witness of their insidious efforts, and could only combat

bat them by an undeviating attention to the increasing wants of her venerable friends.

There is perhaps no sensation more genuinely satisfactory to a well-organized mind, than that which we experience whilst administering to the manifold necessities of age and infirmity; for if even the amiable undertaking be alone answered by the voice of peevishness, we feel ourselves performing the duty enjoined by a Providence which appoints the strong as guardians to the weak, and we go not without that sweetest of rewards, an applauding conscience.

It was this encouraging self-approbation which enabled Mrs. William to get through the long course of nursing that now fell to her lot, without lifting

lifting up the voice of murmur, or breathing a single ejaculation of complaint.

It is true, her cares were considerably lightened by the active part which the gentle Fanny ever unrepiningly sustained in her "*labours of love*;" and besides this, the naturally placid disposition of her charges rendered attendance on them infinitely less irksome than might have been expected; but still there was enough to try human patience to the uttermost, which will be credited by all who honour these pages with perusal, when I inform them that for three whole years Mrs. William continued her unremitting services at Napperton Abbey, and that her only change of scene was from the bedside of Mrs. Mary to the parlour of her brother, who,

who, nearly blind and deaf, was quite incapable of assisting himself, and totally dependent for amusement on the conversation of his visitants.

At length it was the will of the Almighty Lord of lords to terminate the mortal race of Mrs. Mary St. Paul, who departed, we may say full of years, for she had numbered no fewer than ninety anniversaries of her birth.

Her funeral was conducted in strictest conformity with the customs of old times—customs which had never yet been neglected at the interment of any of her family.

As such solemnities are now very differently managed to what they were in the instance of mortality before us, I shall venture on concisely detailing some particulars, which may serve as a record

of

of the period when publicity seemed studied, instead of privacy, and even the tender sex had philosophy enough to follow the relicts of a friend to their last abode, and shed the tender tribute of affection in *propria persona* (not by proxy) at the side of an open grave.

Every individual resident in the village of Napperton received an invitation to dine at the Abbey on the day of the funeral.

Precisely at noon the oaken tables of the great hall groaned beneath the weight of old English hospitality.

Mr. and Mrs. William presided, and even old Mr. St. Paul, notwithstanding his infirmities, was placed in his usual canopied wooden chair.

The board of this capacious apartment was sufficiently extensive for the

comfortable accommodation of the tenantry, principal farmers, and relations.

In the servants' hall and large kitchen were entertained the lower orders, classed at the respective tables with as correct an attention to their several situations in life as can be observed at the strictest court in Christendom.

A bell, which had hung for centuries in one of the angular turrets of the Abbey, announced the conclusion of the substantial repast, and was almost immediately succeeded by a tolling from the steeple of the parish church, which gave notice that preparations for the burial were to commence.

Three venerable matrons, in the deepest weeds, but closely hooded with white silk, now entered the great hall, the

the first of whom bore a basket, lined and covered with napkins of snowy whiteness, and containing hoods, hat-bands, and gloves, sufficient for the supply of the whole company.

One of her followers held a massy silver salver, with spiced wine, and funeral biscuit; and the other presented to each visitor a sprig of yew or rosemary, with its end neatly enfolded in black-edged writing-paper.

These ceremonies were gone through amidst the profoundest silence; and when each person was served, the taciturn old ladies proceeded to the company assembled in the inferior apartments with loads nearly similar to those they had recently distributed in the great hall.

This done, the directress of the solemnity,

lemnity, an ancient family nurse, made her appearance, solemnly inviting the guests to pay a farewell visit to the remains of her departed mistress, which, surrounded by the bearers, and profusely adorned with flowers and aromatic plants, were laid in state, in the venerable spinster's parlour.

This last tribute of respect being paid, the coffin-lid was closed, and its really and justly-lamented inmate for ever excluded from the light of the sun.

In a short time the melancholy procession to the church began, the corpse borne on *towels** of fine white linen, by unmarried women, preceded by the whole choir of village minstrels, chaunting

* The appellation given in many parts of the North of Yorkshire to long pieces of fine linen, exclusively employed in carrying the dead to their graves.

chaunting Sternhold and Hopkins's version of the ninetieth psalm.

At the head of the coffin was carried, by two young girls, a garland of white paper, delicately cut in imitation of flowers, in the centre of which was suspended a pair of gloves, inscribed with the name and age of the departed, and stating that she died a virgin*.

Then followed Mr. St. Paul, supported by his friends, Sympson and Hatchway; and after them, in pairs, Mr. and Mrs. William, and their children (the only relatives, excepting the old squire). The remainder of the numerous attendants,

* Though Mr. Brand says that this ancient custom is entirely laid aside in the North, yet the author has seen many specimens of these virgin crowns, in the remote villages of the Yorkshire Wold, particularly at a place called Bishop Wilton.

dants, with the exception of Fanny, who walked with the kinsfolks, followed without much attention to order.

At the conclusion of the church ritual, the company cast their sprigs* of evergreen into the grave; the young women deposited their paper coronal over the vacant seat† of the deceased; and, after listening to a funeral sermon, from the tenth chapter of the book of Proverbs—

"The memory of the just is blessed,"

the procession returned to the Abbey, in

* Upon her grave the rosemary they threw,
The daisy, butter-flower, and endive-blue.

GAY.

† To her chaste mem'ry flow'ry garlands strung,
On her now empty seat aloft were hung.

GAY.

in the same order it had quitted its gates.

When the principal guests had entered the old mansion, a *dole** was distributed in bread and money to the necessitous poor, who immediately departed to their respective homes.

The only ceremony which now remained for those who re-entered the hall was that of listening to the old lady's will, which was read in an audible voice by Mr. Sharkem; and, after a legacy of five hundred pounds to "Frances Sharkem, junior," and some remembrances

* A distribution to the poor, formerly common at the funerals of rich persons. Chrysostom supposes it was meant to procure rest to the soul of the deceased, and that he might find his judge propitious.—"Charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

brances to old servants, it bequeathed the rest, residue, and remainder of the testatrix's property to her " dear and well-beloved cousin, Margaret, the wife of William St. Paul, esquire, of Marton Hall, in the East Riding of the county of York."

What was infinitely more acceptable to Mrs. William than the knowledge of this disposition of her excellent kinswoman's effects, which secured about four thousand pounds to her family, was the ejaculation which escaped from old Mr. St. Paul, on hearing his sisters last testament recited.

" Just as she ought to have done!" sighed the venerable squire, at the same time affectionately pressing the hand of his cousin's wife; " no one can be so deserving of the little my poor Mary had

to bequeath, as yourself. As to our own Fanny's legacy, it is only given in compliment to the memory of the dear lost Rodney."

From this speech, and the subsequent kindness of their old cousin, Mrs. William's suspicions that the scheming solicitor was likely to succeed to the inheritance of Napperton considerably subsided, and she once more began to flatter herself that the estates of her husband's ancient family, whenever they changed their owner, would descend in their natural channel.

In this agreeable state of anticipation we shall, for the present, leave our amiable acquaintance, Mrs. William St. Paul, and take a rapid flight into that quarter of the globe where we last beheld our juvenile hero, Rodney, respecting

ing whose fate, we doubt not, every reader must feel deeply interested.

CHAPTER VII.

So by some sage enchanter's spell
(As old Arabian fablers tell),
Amid the solitary wild,
Luxuriant gardens gaily smiled;
From sapphire rocks the fountain streamed;
With golden fruit the branches beamed;
Fair forms in ev'ry wond'rous wood,
Or lightly tripp'd, or solemn stood.

WARTON.

RODNEY, to whom every thing was new and charming on the Asiatic coasts, was highly gratified when he gained permission to accompany captain —— to make observations in the beautiful bay of Turon.

The

The country, as may be naturally supposed, was much more interesting to a boy of his activity and age, than the tedious and mechanical process of taking soundings, and making nautical remarks; he therefore petitioned very strenuously for the privilege of stepping ashore, in which, after much importunity, he was indulged, on condition that he should not stray farther than a call from the cutter would be certain to reach him.

Novelties of course were not wanting to attract his attention, for they occurred in every herb, or tree, which waved its leaves or branches in the wind, and every bird which fluttered past; but what attracted his notice more than any other object, animate or inanimate, was a lightly-built pleasure-barge, fitted up

with figured silk awnings, and flags of almost every shape and colour, in the true Chinese gondola style, which was moored close to the shore: the opportunity its deserted state afforded for close inspection was not to be neglected; poor Rodney stepped unhesitatingly on board, and so deeply was he engaged in the survey, that he had been in the vessel a full quarter of an hour before he perceived that the slender cable which had attached it to the land, had, from some accidental cause, lost its hold, and he was floating, by the united force of a rising tide and strong current, very rapidly down the river Campvella.

Vain were his most strenuous efforts to check the progress of his gaily-trimmed bark; oar he could not find, and a rudder hung not in the accustomed situ-

ation

ation (it was probably on account of some repair for it that the vessel had been left without hands on board).

With all the firmness of our young friend Rodney's character, his present was a predicament which could not fail exciting a considerable degree of alarm; and this more particularly when he perceived himself approaching a fall of the expansive river over a line of rocks, which completely crossed its course—this was, even from a considerable distance, unequivocally announced by the rushing " sound of many waters."

Such was the rapidity of his progress, that human art could not succour him; for even had the banks been crowded with spectators, they could only have witnessed his descent of the tremendous cataract.

 " Farewell,

"Farewell, my own sweet Fanny! my dear father! my good mother! my worthy cousins! how you will weep and lament for your poor lost Rodney!" were his ejaculations, when he perceived himself on the brink of destruction—when he felt himself actually precipitated down the dread abyss; and they were the *last words* he uttered—until, waking from a sort of trance, he found himself in what at first he fancied a new world, and surrounded by an unknown race of beings.

By degrees his ideas became collected, and he beheld objects distinctly.

The scenery was such as he had seen delineated on the highly-estimated Indian skreens, and antique specimens of oriental China, at Napperton Abbey.

On every side arose rocks of truly grotesque

grotesque appearance, for the most part surmounted by temples and pagodas, in a variety of forms, and connected by bridges of exquisitely light, but somewhat fantastic structure. Boats of peculiar elegance, brilliant with streamers, flags, and garlands, of almost every hue, floated on the pale green bosom of an undulating lake.

The hands from which he was sensible of receiving the most humane and affectionate attention were the fairest on which his eyes had ever rested; and the attire and features of their owners again brought vividly to his remembrance the ladies depicted on Mrs. Mary St. Paul's jars, in the favourite closet.

The anxious countenance and indefatigable efforts of the director of operations,

tions, struck him with particular force, and excited feelings of esteem and gratitude not to be defaced.

The inspirer was a man considerably past the meridian of life, clad in a flowing garment of white* silk, with a vest and trowsers of the same materials, a girdle of gold, and a curiously-curled beard, of patriarchal length.

Two attendants, in highly-picturesque dresses, strongly resembling Highland plaid, one bearing a long and curious porcelain pipe, and the other a bag of the richest embroidery, stood behind him, like state appendages, whilst many other attendants, somewhat similarly costumed,

* Black is the colour generally worn by persons of distinction, in Cochin-China: white is used there, as in China, for mourning.

costumed, seemed awaiting their commander's nod.

The countenance of the principal personage brightened in proportion with the manifestations of returning reason presented by the aspect of our friend Rodney; and when at length he possessed the power of sitting upright, on a silken mattress beneath him, and looking round with a collected air, the exclamation, "Che-vau-tau!" seemed to burst spontaneously from every lip.

The elderly gentleman retreated suddenly from the surrounding group, and prostrated himself before a gigantic and hideous-looking image, which sat near them, under a richly-ornamented canopy, and appeared as if returning thanks for some signal and extraordinary deliverance, or unexpected favour.

 Ineffec-

was misunderstood, for the yacht in which he was speedily afterwards embarked, with the principal part of the company, sailed to an immediately contrary quarter from that towards which he wished to voyage.

At another time, and in different circumstances, the navigation of the winding river on which he sailed would have afforded the highest gratification possible; the shores on either hand, though generally flat, were not, by any means, unpicturesque, for they were clothed with groups of trees, in great variety, and to an European eye mostly new. The orange conspicuously shone with golden fruit, whilst the air was delightfully impregnated with its fragrant blossoms; the plantains waved their umbrageous

brageous foliage, and seemed to invite the travellers to their cooling bowers; the elegant areca-nut tree and more sombre-tinted lime mingled their hues; and flowering shrubs, to which our young hero could not give a name, were spread in endless and agreeable confusion on every side.

The habitations too, which very frequently presented themselves, were singularly striking, being built principally of bamboo, and raised on wooden pilasters, several feet from the ground.

During the first day's voyage they went ashore twice, and took refreshment with persons who, from their train of attendants, appeared of the first importance, and at night were lodged with every

every possible attention to accommodation.

Rodney had his mattress spread in the same room with him whom the whole party obviously looked up to as a superior, and by him was attended on with the affectionate tenderness of the kindest parent.

At the conclusion of the third day, the gaily-ornamented vessels quitted the regular course of the river, and sailed along a narrow cut, which soon terminated in an expansive canal, the banks of which were studded with pleasure-houses of almost every description, from the stately pagoda, of twenty stories, to the humble awning, supported on bamboo poles.

A group of women, under the shade of

of cocoa trees, accompanied by several children, were amusing themselves, as the voyagers approached, with a game which required the winner to drive a wheel a given number of evolutions by one stroke, for which dexterous feat several elegant toys were the reward.

The entertainment seemed not, however, to interest half so much as the party who were landing, for it was immediately relinquished, and there appeared quite a contest who should be foremost to assist the venerable chief in setting his foot ashore.

Rodney, who at one glance embraced every surrounding object, could not avoid remarking, that during the time his elderly friend conversed with the party who received him, he directed

their

their attention particularly towards him, whilst they in return seemed to answer, with one accord, in the very words he had heard so repeatedly, "Che-vau-tau!"

From the water-side they proceeded through a serpentine passage, of obviously-artificial rock-scenery, to an abode which occupied an almost incredible extent of ground, for its numerous apartments were all on the same floor.

Every affectionate attention was lavished most profusely on our friend, the young St. Paul, who appeared at once installed the general favourite of the family.

Amusement, in all its ramifications, was studiously prepared for him. A theatre opened in front of the apartment

ment where he lodged; jugglers, dancers, tumblers, and the extempore* story-tellers, so well known in all eastern climes, vied with each other continually who should rivet his attention most effectually.

Two venerable male personages were exclusively devoted to his service; and so unremitting was the exercise of their guardian office, that, excepting when they left him under the eye of the master of the family, or in the apartment of the ladies, they never lost sight of him during the day, and at night were only separated from his sleeping-room by a slight silken drapery.

The

* Though Rodney could not at first understand their stories, yet their gestures and grimaces highly amused him.

The occupation of the morning was invariably teaching their pupil how to express himself in the language of their country, which differs not very materially from the Chinese, and is pretty copiously interlarded with expressions which bespeak a Tartar origin.

It is generally considered a very difficult, if not insurmountable task for an European to become thoroughly conversant with the Chinese tongue—such indeed is its infinity of terms and characters, that it requires a whole, and not a very short life, to become acquainted with them.

In addition to a particularly retentive memory, Rodney had a very urgent spur for assiduity in his new undertaking, when he considered that on his

capability

capability of expressing himself rested the chance of explaining how he came there, and his earnest wish for rejoining his countrymen, who, by this time, were probably travelling over land to Pekin, if they had not already reached the imperial court: he fagged, therefore, with a ceaseless industry, and in the course of even a very few weeks, was able to designate familiar objects by their appropriate appellations, and make known his most pressing wants.

He was soon able to converse intelligibly on almost any subject, with his instructors, and from them learnt some extraordinary particulars in the domestic history of his preserver, the mandarin, Fi-cham-tau, which kindled in his affectionate bosom the most generous pity, and quite incapacitated him

from

from immediately expressing a desire of finding some method of pursuing the footsteps of the British embassy.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VIII.

Submit thy soul to Heav'n's all-wise decree;
Perhaps his life had blasted more thy hopes
Than e'en his grievous end.

MISS BAILLIE.

THE venerable mandarin, Fi-cham-tau, had been married many years; and, according to the custom of the country he inhabited, divided his attentions among several wives and mistresses, many of whom proved fruitful, though not one, through a long course of years, presented him with a son*; this was a grievous

* Being without a son is, in China, and most of its tributary

grievous disappointment to a man whose possessions were ample.

In vain were offerings presented at the shrines of his domestic deities, and in the temples of the most celebrated idols throughout the tributary kingdom of Cochin-China.

In vain, likewise, were his applications to the wisest astrologers* of the time, from consulting whom he could not be deterred by journeys even to the remotest provinces of the vast Chinese empire.

The

tributary provinces, considered so great a misfortune, that a man may obtain a divorce on that account.

* It is astonishing, according to the report of the most authentic travellers, what implicit reliance many inhabitants of the eastern countries have upon the opinion of their soothsayers; they consult them on almost every occasion, and unhesitatingly act according to their commands.

. The prophecies, in some instances, were favourable; but, alas! they all faded into air at the moment when completion was expected.

This frequent failure of a darling hope wrought so powerfully on the mind of the unhappy Fi-cham-tau, that he seemed gradually sinking into a state which bore every alarming symptom of incipient insanity.

Such was the esteem in which this unfortunate man was held by his family, that it appeared their united study to divert his fancy in every possible way. But ineffectual proved the attempt! the most luminous fireworks scintillating on the dark face of night to no purpose —the humours of the pantomimic theatre excited not a smile—the gigantic, almost reasoning elephant, went through

his extraordinary manœuvres, without the reward of one approving glance from him whom all were endeavouring to animate: in short, he viewed every scene, every change, with an equally apathetic air, and received only fatigue where his friends designed amusement.

From this alarming state he was at length roused by the despaired-of information, that his most favourite wife had presented him with a son.

What a different being did the mandarin now become! the cloud of despondency floated from his countenance, and like the gold-winged butterfly emerging from a torpid chrysalis, he seemed to gain a new existence.

Festivity and rejoicing exhibited themselves, in almost endless change, on every

every side; the monstrous inhabitants of every temple and pagoda in the neighbourhood were almost inundated with such offerings as the ministering priests pronounced most acceptable.

The infant was named Che-vau-tau, which, for any thing the writer knows to the contrary, may, according to oriental custom, admit of some such interpretation as "Sun of Beauty," or "Child of Hope;" be this as it might, he was certainly well entitled to these, or similar epithets, for in the course of a very few years he became the universal wonder for his exquisite beauty and extraordinary genius, and a complete object of adoration to his doting father and affectionate sisters. Unfortunately his mother died in the same moment when she gave him birth.

 Who

Who now exultingly anticipated that the successor to his numerous honours and extensive possessions should be of an immortal fame?—who now daily and nightly was employed in scheme on scheme for the aggrandizement of his promising heir, but the mandarin, Fi-cham-tau?

Thus satisfactorily engaged, did nine delightful years glide silently away.

Alas! mournful uncertainty of mundane bliss! Ah, mistaken those who think any thing sure on this side the grave!

A cloud of thick darkness was gathering over the dwelling—was bursting, spending its violence on the head of the little-suspecting mandarin.

The youthful darling suddenly sickened, and, like a flower untimely cropped,

ped, hung his beauteous head, and died.

Heavily on all, but heaviest, as may be supposed, on the bereaved father, fell the dreadful, irremediable shaft. He sunk under it at first, like a man instantaneously overwhelmed by the thunderbolt from heaven; and when at length he recovered physical strength enough to rear his head from the ground, he appeared so stunned with the blow, as to exhibit little more animation than a statue.

In this deplorable state he remained during many a revolving day: months even elapsed before his paralyzed faculties received any thing of their former tone; and then it was by very slow degrees that they revived. He looked round like a man "emerging from a sea

of dreams*," doubting whether the prominent idea were real or imaginary. Its reality remained not long equivocal; he called for his child—the welcome voice replied not; he sought him—" his place was not to be found."

A copious shower of tears ensued the sad discovery; this salutary vent relieved oppressed nature, and most probably prevented a violent display of desperate grief.

But did it wash away the feeling? Ah no! grief was here too real, too deep to be expressed by boisterous raving; it assumed a far more alarming aspect—it was of that quiet, unassuming, uncomplaining sort, which proved the heart oppressed beyond the power of expression.

The

* Young.

The only enjoyment that life seemed to furnish was that of weeping on the grave of his departed child; and this he indulged in very frequently, though the place of interment lay at a very considerable distance from his dwelling.

The spot whère the sacred relics were deposited was called "the Valley of Tombs," from the circumstance of many of the principal Cochin-Chinese families having selected it as their cemetery. It was a place by nature peculiarly adapted for seclusion and retreat, being encircled on every side with rising grounds, excepting that which gradually sloped down to a lake, supplied with beautifully transparent water from an ever-falling cascade.

Agreeable to the prevalent taste of the country, it had been adorned with

 a whimsical

a whimsical variety of rock-scenery, and planted with every tree of funereal aspect; above all, the weeping willow, which there grew to an enormous size, hung its pensile foliage in mournful profusion.

Various as the bodies consigned to moulder in "this place of graves," were the monumental piles erected by surviving affection.

On one hand rose the light and elegant pagoda, of many storied heights, thickly studded with the images of tutelary saints; and, on the other, perhaps the humblest structure imaginable unostentatiously protected the ashes of the dead.

The tomb of the lamented Che-vautau differed considerably from every other sepulchral edifice in its vicinity:

it

it formed a small circular apartment, supporting on its roof an elevated pyramid, shaped somewhat like a mitre, and was completely overshadowed by a prodigiously umbrageous willow.

Beneath its consecrated canopy the afflicted parent passed many a melancholy hour, during visits of several days' continuance, which, accompanied by his family, he paid many times in the course of twelve months to the gloomy vale.

The doctrine of transmigration of souls prevails very generally among the Chinese and their tributary neighbours. The religious party which influenced the mandarin Fi-cham-tau were amongst the number of its most strenuous advocates; and such was the effect which this extraordinary faith produced upon

 the

the disordered mind of the old gentleman, that from it he received his only comfort—it wrought within him a delusive expectation, that his deplored child's spiritual part had passed into some new body, which when presented to him, he should immediately and instinctively know, and so become repossessed of his lost treasure.

To hasten the fulfilment of this strange expectation, he spent the greatest part of his time in going from the shrine of one celebrated idol to another; and it was no inconsiderable proportion of his ample revenues which went towards propitiating the gods.

These pilgrimages were invariably concluded with a visit to the "Valley of Tombs;" and it was during one of them that the venerable mandarin, whilst

pacing

pacing the banks of the neighbouring lake, beheld a human body floating on the face of its undulating waters: now the unfortunate wretch, buoyed up by the waves, seemed swimming fast ashore —again he sunk from observation: once his face was partially revealed—enough was discernible to work up the feelings of Fi-cham-tau to the highest pitch of enthusiasm—in short, he fancied he again beheld his long-lamented son.

Without the smallest hesitation, he plunged into the water, and in a few seconds fortunately succeeded in landing the almost-exhausted body.

Assistance was at hand, for the mandarin never strayed very far from his attendants.

"Thanks be to the great and benefi-

cent Fo, the request of my lips has been granted! my child, my long-regretted Che-vau-tau, is once more embodied in a human form—once more my own!" exclaimed the old gentleman, though half suffocated with the water, as he deposited his valued burthen on the green bank of the lake.

All hands were speedily employed; and, in an incredibly short time, the nearly drowned boy was placed on a mattress, and the mandarin supplied with dry garments.

The existence of a wonderful resemblance borne by Rodney to the departed Che-vau-tau could not fail striking the whole party; and such was the effect it produced, when he was dressed *à la Cochin-Chinoise*, that they involuntarily

tarily joined in the overjoyed mandarin's exclamation—"It is, it must be our lost Che-vau-tau!"

Had any thing been wanting to confirm the old man's conviction that the darling of his heart was really restored to him, nothing could have been better calculated for the purpose than this unanimous acknowledgment; it rendered even assurance doubly sure—it kindled intelligent expression in an eye which, during many a day gone past, had been fixed in almost idiotic vacancy.

His daughters hailed with rapture the auspicious change; and, to insure its permanency, endeavoured, by every external testimony, to evince a full persuasion of their brother's resuscitation; nor is this, even supposing them divested

ed wholly of their father's prejudices in favour of the doctrine of transmigration of souls, more than might be expected, when we consider the high estimation in which filial duty is held by all the followers of Fo, who allow to children, of whatever age or rank, scarcely a will independent of their father and mother, and who suffer not any thing, however severe, to be called a sacrifice, when yielded in compliance with parental mandates.

That the priests of Fo should encourage Fi-cham-tau's strange infatuation will excite no astonishment, when we reflect that they draw their principal support from enthusiastic devotees, and that the case before them, by judicious management, promised incalculable advantages.

With

With the mandarin the part they had to sustain was rendered easy, by the avidity with which his distempered imagination received every impression connected with the acknowledgment of Che-vau-tau's restoration.

Not of the same facile nature appeared the task of managing Rodney; his intelligent countenance testified a superior mind, and from his years they naturally apprehended he must have imbibed opinions in his own country, completely at variance with their own monstrous doctrine, which all their sophistry would combat in vain.

Fortunately for the prosecution of their plans, Rodney, on his arrival, had neither the power of explaining his situation by words, or understanding the language of those around him; they consequently

had

had time to precede action by deliberation, and from studying his character as it gradually unfolded to the view, discover the most likely method of eventually moulding him to their purposes.

CHAPTER IX.

Quoth Ralph, not far from hence doth dwell
A cunning man, hight Sidrophel,
That deals in destiny's dark counsels,
And sage opinions of the moon sells.
* * * *
Then let us straight advance in quest
Of this profound Gymnosophist;
And as the fates and he advise,
Pursue or wave this enterprise.

BUTLER.

THE venerable personages whom we have already invested with the important office of Rodney's guardians and instructors were, as will be easily guessed from what has gone before, selected from

Fi-

Fi-cham-tau's favourite priests. They readily perceived the extraordinary capacity of their pupil, strikingly manifested by his rapid acquirement of their difficult language.

Of the qualities of his heart an ingenuous countenance spoke most favourably; and that among them might be classed a peculiarly warm sense of benefits received was clearly testified by the most respectful attention to instruction, and an unceasing endeavour to display gratitude in every possible shape to all around, but more particularly to the preserver of his life.

On this trait in his character, his tutors, Lin-ta and Che-che, dwelt with extraordinary pleasure—not so much, perhaps, from its intrinsic excellence, as the certain and easy method it opened

of

of working upon his feelings, and influencing him to act in conformity with their mercenary designs.

Our affectionately-disposed hero would have hearkened with interest to a story of distress, though the parties had been utter strangers to him—what then must we expect to have been his sensations, when, in the most pathetic terms, the domestic sorrows of that being who had snatched him from a watery grave were unfolded to his ear? Could his eye be expected to withhold the copious shower of tears? his breast the sigh of agony?

The effect produced infinitely exceeded the expectation of the crafty narrators, Lin-ta and his companion; they saw plainly the "vantage ground" on which they stood; and, without allowing

ing time for Rodney's excited feelings to subside, followed up the detail of Che-vau-tau's sudden death, by a moving description of his father's melancholy insanity, his sleepless nights, his wearisome days, his tedious pilgrimages, his repeated voyages to the " Valley of Tombs," his long-indulged hope that his son would yet be restored to him, and, finally, his confident persuasion of his singular expectation's fulfilment, which took possession of his mind at the moment when he rescued the perishing Rodney from destruction.

" To immediately dispute the reality of this exhilarating conviction," added they, " might produce fatal consequences; his malady would doubtless resume its most terrific form; or perhaps immediate death ensue. Give the unhappy

happy man but time, and it is possible his reasoning powers may recover strength enough to convince him of the fallacy of his present conclusions. But all, dear young friend, rests with you—you seem the arbiter of the worthy mandarin's fate; he may still be continued to us, or lost for ever!"

Rodney felt as much as could be felt for one to whom we owe the weightiest obligation; but he was averse from the deceit which must be practised by a voluntary assumption of the character of the mandarin's son.

"The motives which impel your conduct, if you *do* assume that character," argued the priests, "will amply justify it; and instead of injuring Fi-cham-tau by humouring his belief, you will be rendering him an essential kindness—

you

you will be conducing to the composure of his long-agitated mind, and delightfully soothing the few remaining years of his earthly journey—*Few*, alas! they will probably be, for his constitution, never robust, must have sustained irreparable injury from agitations of such long and uninterrupted duration. Dear youth, you relent—your scruples give way—your countenance tells me that, at least for the present, you will receive the caresses of the excellent Fi-cham-tau as those proceeding from a father."

To prove that Lin-ta and his coadjutor were tolerable physiognomists, we must acknowledge that they guessed pretty accurately the employment of Rodney's mind at this moment, for he was in reality endeavouring to conform himself

himself to their wishes, striving to array the deceptive part he must put on in the garb of a pious fraud, authorized by peculiar circumstances, and dictated by gratitude to the greatest of benefactors.

At length he resolved, and announced his intention of regulating, at any rate his immediate motions, by the advice of the priests; but still he consented not to this unconditionally—he stipulated for the privilege of writing to his friends in Great Britain, and bound Lin-ta and Che-che in a solemn promise to forward his letters by the very first European ships which anchored in Turon Bay, near which (though distant three days' journey from the mandarin's general residence) one or other of them

was

was professionally engaged several times in the course of the year.

Aware of the dreadful anxiety into which his extraordinary disappearance would plunge his affectionate relatives at Marton and the Abbey, Rodney allowed not many hours to elapse without commencing a written detail of all that had befallen him since his separation from the embassy, and the likelihood there appeared of his present singular circumstances detaining him from his dear native island during a considerable lapse of time.

"I cannot say, after all," observed he, in a part of his epistle, exclusively addressed to Fanny Sharkem, "that I should regrèt having fallen into my present curious situation—that is, as a

temporary

temporary change, were I not at such an immense distance from you and my beloved relations, for it abounds with novelties of every possible description, which, like the wonders of a moving panorama, are changing every moment, and realize, in a most extraordinary manner, the visionary anticipations of what was to befall me during my Sinbad-like voyages, in which, you will recollect, I indulged very freely, whilst reading the marvellous travellers of antiquity, preserved in the old library at Napperton Abbey; and of this you would be satisfactorily convinced, could I present your Rodney to you in his full Cochin-Chinese costume of flowing black silk—with his tutors in mitres, robes, and rosaries, strongly resembling those used in the Roman Catholic

church—his turbaned and plaided page and pipe-bearer—his mandarin papa, and sisters to the number of twelve: could I likewise delineate his avocations and amusements, following each other in an almost endless succession; but on these, and 'a thousand and one' occurrences extraordinary, he lives in hopes of being eloquent during many a long winter's night, in Mrs. Mary's parlour, at the Abbey.

"The distance at which these dearly-longed-for evenings may be from me, I dare not even trust myself to think upon, lest, unmindful of the debt of gratitude which binds me here, I should leave the good mandarin, Fi-cham-tau, to the frightful ravages of his deplorable malady, and endeavour to accomplish an escape to old England.

"That

"That my continuance in this country is not entirely dependent on the duration of the mandarin's life, I sometimes hope, for surely a belief that I am in reality his deceased son is too absurd, for a man, whose general demeanour bespeaks not incurable insanity, to perseveringly maintain, particularly where it is quite an improvement on the strange doctrine of transmigration, which, as far as I can learn, merely teaches that the souls of departed persons may, for the wise purposes of the Almighty Father, or as a sort of purgatory for sins done in the flesh, be born again into the world, in some new form. Now, in my extraordinary case, I must be considered as a completely reanimated body, walking in the face of day, after

above three years consignment to the silent grave, and, which adds considerably to the miracle, having attained the increase of stature that might have been expected, though the course of nature had met with no interruption.

"What causes me to think that some confused notion he is in error floats upon the brain of the mandarin is, a visit which I find we are on the eve of making to a famous astrologer, whom he has been in habits of consulting on all pressing emergencies, and who resides on the line of mountains which divide this kingdom from Cambodia.

"On the decree of this reputed 'wise man of the east,' rests therefore the confutation or confirmation of my identity with Che-vau-tau.

"I wish

"I wish most heartily I could hit on some expedient for influencing his decision, for then I should be universally acknowledged as neither more nor less than your really unalterable

"RODNEY ST. PAUL."

Very soon after the conclusion of this letter, from which we have indulged the reader with the foregoing extracts, it was entrusted to the care of Che-che; and, according to his declaration, on returning from a periodical visit to a temple of Fo, in the vicinity of Turon Bay, was delivered to a Portuguese captain, who solemnly undertook to transmit it by the Lisbon packet to England.

Where the fault lay, cannot, with all

an author's penetration, be determined; but this we know for certain, that neither it, nor many others, written by the same pen, and addressed to the same parties, ever reached their intended place of destination.

Had they but done so—we cannot resist apostrophizing—what misery would have been prevented!—what agonizing tortures of suspense have been spared to the kind-hearted inhabitants of Napperton Abbey!

Rodney's letter had not, according to his reasonable hopes and calculations, been embarked many days for *home*, before the visit therein alluded to was publicly announced, and almost every member of Fi-cham-tau's family busied in preparations for it.

The

The ladies were principally occupied in forming wreaths and bunches of artificial flowers, baskets and lanterns of beautifully-coloured paper, and various articles of the most costly and highly-finished embroidery. The slaves were busied in selecting and packing the choicest fruits and confectionary, and making the most dazzling and unique fire-works.

Several weeks elapsed before the mandarin and his family were ready to enter the gay vessels, fitted to convey them through the majority of their journey.

The embarkation occupied two days, as several enormous elephants were included in the party; and the apparatus for erecting a temporary theatre, together

gether with its multifarious performers, was taken on board.

They sailed, and perhaps a "lighter-hearted crew" never unfurled canvas to the swelling breeze.

The barges, singular to an European eye from their puckered sail, and the immense elevation of their stern above the water's edge, were furnished with every comfort to be found in a Cochin-Chinese house of the first consequence, both as to shelter from the elements, and arrangements for eating and repose; and their masts and rigging were as profusely bedecked with garlands, flags, and streamers, as those of the smaller vessels, which followed like as many floating pavilions, rich in silken awnings, and canopies of gilded and painted

wood-

wood-work, in every fanciful variety of form.

These were the day boats of our female voyagers, and in them, whilst enjoying the delicious coolness of the breeze from the water, they were agreeably shaded from the rays of the bright sun, which shone in unclouded splendour upon the enterprise.

The voyage of the first day afforded but little amusement to Rodney, as the banks of the canal presented nothing more than a repetition of level country, intersected by formal rows of willow and alder, with occasional groups of bamboo houses, and sometimes enlivened by the towering stories of a distant pagoda, or a nearer peep at some mitre-domed miaos, or temple.

Afterwards the country highly im-

proved in picturesque beauty, and in place of the monotonous swamp, gratified the eye with undulating hills, crowned with wood, sweeping gently down to the very edge of the water.

The curious ceremony which a little preceded their landing was singular enough to arrest Rodney's particular attention: a cock, the conspicuous colour of whose plumage was yellow, was sacrificed with great solemnity to the river-gods, in return for a prosperous voyage; or, as our young friend could not avoid conjecturing, with some reference to his rescue from the waves, in which he felt himself supported by observing the peculiar devotion of Fi-cham-tau, during the whole transaction.

The

The remainder of the journey was exceedingly amusing to our young traveller, offering at every step something new, as well in respect to the perpetually changing features of the landscape, as the aspect of the inhabitants, and the external of their habitations—I say external, because the mandarin allowed not his attendants to go beneath any roof during their journey, excepting those dedicated to religious purposes; with such they fell in pretty frequently, and as often enriched the idol of the consecrated spot with some valuable present.

As they drew near the place of destination, a wildness of scenery, approaching to sublimity, prevailed, well adapted for the residence of a being like him

whom they had travelled such an immense length of way for the express purpose of visiting.

The hills rose, line above line, until they might justly be entitled to the epithet of mountains. At a distance they seemed clothed with that delightful purple tint, so lovely to the eye of an artist; when surveyed nearly, their hue was that sombre brown which the high regions of every warm climate almost invariably wear. Scarcely a tree was to be met with for miles; human habitations were still less frequent.

At the commencement of the acclivity on which the sage resided, a temple of wide dimensions reared its lofty head; beneath the consecrated dome our pious travellers

travellers failed not to deposit a propitiatory sacrifice.

The god Fo, and the universal Mother (who, by the way, strongly resembles the Madona of Rome, from being represented with a young child, and crowned with flowers), were the deities of the place, and sat in state, amidst quite a court of minor idols, of form and aspect so truly horrible, that one might be excused suspecting their manufacturers considered ugliness as an object deserving adoration.

Several temple-like edifices, of inferior architecture and extent, occurred before the travellers reached the place where it was customary for the astrologer's visitants to rest, until they had announced, by an avant courier, their intention of consulting him.

The

The cavalcade, winding up to this elevated spot, alternately appearing and disappearing with the undulations of the mountain, would have furnished an admirable model for theatrical imitation in some oriental romance, and was curious enough to deserve a concise description.

Several slaves, in military costume, wearing vests of dark red cloth, and armed with sabres, and pikes of vast length, ornamented with tassels of hair dyed red, led the way. Then followed Lin-ta and Che-che, full robed, in caps and habits of silk, with immense rosaries of black beads suspended from the girdle: priests of lower order were in their train, bearing gilded figures of dragons, and images of the gods. The great Fi-cham-tau proceeded next, with

Rodney

Rodney on his left hand, each in a sedan chair, gorgeously painted and gilt. The bearers of the "rewards of divination," in plaided dresses and turbans, thronged close to the carriage of their master.

The presents, concealed from public inspection in immense vases of porcelain, consisted of rare fruits, preserves, garments of silk, the highest flavoured tea and tobacco, areca nut and betel leaf, in bags of rich embroidery, with China pipes of extraordinary elegance.

The female part of the illustrious mandarin's establishment were, like the presents which they immediately followed, shaded from the eye, in vehicles not very dissimilar to a tilted cart, carefully closed

closed on every side by bamboo lattices. Three stately elephants, richly housed, governed by boys, who rode upon their necks, went next; and then came up the packages and performers of the temporary theatre: a long train of attendants, armed, or bearing flags and garlands, and a troop of musicians, playing on instruments resembling, both in form and sound, the Scotch bagpipe, brought up the rear.

The hitherto swelling bosom of the mountain flattened suddenly into an almost level plain, where this numerous party was called upon to halt.

A conical peak, and irregular ridge of rocks, bounded the view upwards; but on looking down, the eye roved without control over an immense range of coun-

try,

try, bright in rich verdure, and veined with the blue waters of many a winding river and canal.

Tents were immediately pitched, and in the course of a very few hours the desert might be literally said to swarm with population.

Lin-ta was speedily dispatched to inform the diviner of the mandarin's arrival, and solicit admission to an early interview.

The old priest returned in about an hour, and reported a most gracious reception, but at the same time brought word that Fi-cham-tau must defer entering the cave of the seer until "*a full moon had risen an hour above the apex of the great peak.*"

Three days must elapse before the

planet

planet of the night would fill her horns. This interval of time hung a little heavy on the hands of the mandarin; but he bore it uncomplainingly, for to him, in the voice of the astrologer—

> Th' Almighty spake, nor durst the pow'rs reply,
> A reverend horror silenc'd all the sky!
>
> POPE.

The important moment when Cynthia next revealed "her silvery circle in a cloudless sky," above the summit of the peak, happened at midnight.

At that solemn season behold the venerable Fi-cham-tau, and our friend Rodney, attended only by Lin-ta, bending their steps to what the leader of their party undoubtedly considered the shrine of an unerring oracle.

The

The hour and scenery were alike calculated to fill the mind with gloomy conceptions; this, I trust, will apologize for my hero, when I confess that his heart beat with somewhat of an unusual palpitation, when he found himself called upon to enter an habitation not made with mortal hand, but a wide and lofty cleft*, in a prodigious rock. The rude arch of admission, formed no doubt by some violent convulsion of nature, externally expanded on a very grand scale; but on entering its portal the roof gradually lowered, until the passenger could with difficulty advance erect. Again the cavern widened upwards to a very considerable elevation. The gleam of moonlight

* The author had the famous cavern at Castleton in view in this description.

moonlight here was completely lost, and all would have been darkness, but for the lanterns with which Lin-ta had provided his companions.

Another contraction of this natural vault was passed, and they then reached a large dismal hall, lighted by a single flame, in a recess at the upper end of which sat, or, more properly speaking, squatted a human figure, ill agreeing with Rodney's ideas of "one who brooded o'er the midnight lamp, and spent his lonely hours in commerce with the stars."

The extraordinary personage thus presented was corpulent to an immense degree, had a complete rotundity of visage, with small half-shut eyes, a flat nose, and a head which would have

been

been completely bald, had not a lock of grey hair sprouted from the very centre of its crown, like a tuft on the scholars' cap at Oxford and Cambridge.

His garments of many colours were singularly formed, for they left his breast and body bare quite down to the girdle. Before him stood a very low tripod table, strewed with hieroglyphicked papers in great abundance. On one side were images of Fo and his frightful satellites, with a lamp burning at their feet; and behind him an irregular fissure in the rock allowed the partial view of an interior cavern, faintly lighted, in which shadowy figures were perpetually gliding backward and forward.

The demeanour of the wise man did not strike Rodney as at all conciliating, for

for he neither rose up nor spoke on the approach of the mandarin, and received his almost performance of the Ko-teou * without any ostensible acknowledgment.

Fi-cham-tau seemed overpowered with this unlooked-for coolness, and words failed him when he would have made known his petition.

The eyelids of the sage gradually raised themselves, and he gazed with an interrogatory glance at his visitors.

A pause ensued, and was followed by his throwing powder from the table before him upon a censer standing parallel with the lamp near Fo's image.

A quivering

* Or *adoration*, as the Chinese term it, without the performance of which no one dare approach the emperor.

A quivering blue flame curled upwards for a minute, a thick smoke instantly filled the cave, and a low, but clear and distinct voice, was heard, interrogating—" Why cometh he attended?"

Lin-ta caught the hand of Rodney; and, before he well knew where he was, he found himself once more in the open air, and beheld the moonbeams darting their silvery splendour on the tents of the mandarin's party.

" Is my dear preserver safe?" was the only inquiry of our young and affectionate hero; and on hearing his question affirmatively answered, he retired to the enjoyment of that sweet repose which is seldom refused to the eyelids of innocence.

Lin-ta

Lin-ta sat at the side of his mattress when he awoke, and cheered him with the acceptable intelligence that the mandarin returned from the cavern in tolerable spirits; and, as a proof that he and the astrologer were on friendly terms, announced that the latter was to be his guest, during several days, and intended to partake of the entertainments which had been provided for him, with every possible attention to variety and magnificence.

Rodney's entreaties for information as to the cause and result of the mandarin's visit to the scene of last night's strange adventures, were too pressing to be long resisted by his friend Lin-ta; and from him he consequently learnt that Fi-cham-tau had, for some time

past,

past, been agitated with a painful apprehension that the being whom he snatched from the water in the "Valley of Tombs" was not in reality his regretted son: this had got possession of his imagination during a temporary clearness of intellect, which allowed him to wonder at the supposed Che-vau-tau's utter ignorance of his native tongue. On this he had brooded night and day, until it spake to him something bordering on conviction.

But who gives up a darling hypothesis without many struggles? Who would voluntarily lose a son so promising as Rodney?

There *was* an individual who, according to Fi-cham-tau's prejudices, could rightly solve the momentous point: to

 him

him he resolved on going—by his opinion he determined to be entirely guided.

"And what," asked Rodney, with an almost breathless impatience, "what, my dear good Lin-ta, is the opinion of the sage?"

"That," returned the priest, "is yet unknown, even to the mandarin himself:- answers on such occasions are invariably ambiguous, consequently indecisive. Subsequent to our departure from the cave, and the dispersal of the smoke, the mandarin ventured to explain the occasion of his visit.

"A grumbling murmur of disapprobation was for some time all that met his ear; as it died away, the flame in the lamp at Fo's feet revived, and he beheld

beheld the astrologer before the images in an attitude of supplication.

"The gods relented, if we may judge from the brightening fire, and the countenance of the supplicant. The latter suddenly resumed his squatting posture, and bending forward, delivered, without a word, into the hand of his visitor a written paper, merely containing an announcement that '*under the sepulchre of Che-vau-tau, in the Valley of Tombs, would be found a decided answer to his interrogations*.'

"Fi-cham-tau bent in grateful acknowledgment, and then, after a respectful pause, ventured to request the sage's participation in such amusements as present circumstances allowed him to offer.

 "A bow

"A bow was the only symptom of acceptance; but this the mandarin considered quite sufficient to ensure his appearance as a visitor in our tents; so tomorrow we expect the supreme honour of this sapient gentleman's company, and then the presents prepared for him will be delivered."

Early the next morning the mandarin's state sedan, with a double canopy, attended at the entrance of the astrologer's lonely abode, and very shortly after received its '*deep learned' load.*

Fi-cham-tau's people were drawn up in solemn array to welcome the important guest.

The ladies came forth to receive him in their gayest and richest attire; and, under

under their silken pavillion, he had the particular privilege of being presented with his favourite areca-nut and betel leaf.

After a sufficient pause being allowed for refreshment, the performers on the stage commenced their operations; and, by the smiles they elicited from the turgid muscles of the seer, we may conclude excelled particularly in the comic department.

The elephants too performed most admirably, and, as a reward, had the supreme felicity of receiving, from the hands of the sage himself, honeyed bread, and the most delicious confectionary.

The entertainments were continued three successive days; at the expiration of which the astrologer, together with

the fruits of his labour, was escorted back in great state to his secluded habitation in the cavern of the peak.

CHAP-

CHAPTER X.

Ah! let me not prescribe a bound to Heaven!
'Twas by a miracle the child was given;
Nor can I think the wonder is more great,
If the departed soul resume her seat.

STEPHEN DUCK.

It will not be supposed that more than the absolutely necessary time was consumed in the mandarin Fi-cham-tau's journey and voyage homeward, or that the prescribed visit to the "Valley of Tombs" would be very long postponed.

Rodney and his patron approached

the place of graves with equally agitated feelings: pleasing anticipations, though of different origin, exhilarated the bosom of each: the former flattered himself with a speedy release from his present singular and embarrassing situation; the latter, that the hour was at hand when every painful doubt should disperse in air, and assurance, clear as the voice of Heaven could make it, establish his "dear warm hope."

The consecrated dome was before them—the portals were thrown open. What an awful moment for the poor mandarin! here it was he had committed to the dust his only earthly delight—here that he had kept many a mournful vigil.

He was almost overcome with melancholy

choly recollections; but hope, sweet soother, revived him, and he passed forward into the dreary tomb.

Silence and desertion reigned on every side—the walls were black and damp with unwholesome dew, drops of which hung, like pendants of sparkling jet, even on the hallowed images of the gods, which frowned terrifically on every side.

In vain did he look round for any thing in the shape of the promised answer to his queries! His heart throbbed violently—his sanguine spirit failed—he felt himself assuredly undone.

On the ground behold him prostrate, in all the agonies of despair.—"Oh, Fo!" cried he, raising his eye as he spoke to the colossal figure of that deity

 —"oh,

—"oh, Fo! thou hast deceived——" but he completed not the sentence, for he saw before him a scroll, in the hand of the idol, inscribed with characters bearing this interpretation:—

"*The grave has given up her dead! Search!*"

To what a revival did this short sentence give birth! He rose quickly: Lin-ta waited not for orders—the attendants were called, and in a very short time the white tiles, which formed the pavement, were displaced; the earth that had once been cast upon the corpse of Che-vau-tau was again thrown up—the coffin appeared—Awful and important crisis! the next movement must raise the mandarin to the most rapturous felicity, or plunge him in irremediable woe.

The

The lid was raised—relics of a human body appeared not!—Words to the following effect presented themselves:—

"*This empty receptacle of mortality speaks the beneficence of the gods!*

"*Fo heard thy persevering prayer!*

"*The universal Mother groaned to give thy child a second birth!*

"*The Ruler of the waters presented him to thee!*

"*They sent him from silence, perfect as if the current in his veins had never ceased to flow—fresh with youthful vigour, and improved in size and form!*

"*And yet this marvellous magnificence of goodness was not sufficient for thee! Thou must* DOUBT, *because he*

spake not the language of thy fathers!

"KNOW, *Fi-cham-tau*, THIS WAS FOR THE TRIAL OF THY FAITH!

"*Beware lest obstinacy and disbelief should make the gods repent their kindness, and take back their* GIFT—*then would thy name perish upon earth!* BEWARE!"

When we reflect on the state of the old mandarin's mind, and how his feverish imagination had been fermented by recent circumstances, we shall readily conceive how overwhelming he would find the task of reading the above sentences, traced, as *he* was perfectly persuaded, by an immortal finger.

For some minutes he stood, like one bewildered in a pathless maze, without

"or

"or sun, or moon, or star," to light his steps: his "eyes were open, but their sense was shut."

Lin-ta could not suppress a painful self-reproach, as he gazed upon the living monument before him; his conscience *would* be heard proclaiming—"This is *thy* work! Thy mercenary designs are defeated! Thou hast stretched the cord so tightly, it has burst!"

The first position was strictly and literally true, for in Lin-ta's suggestions the mandarin's strange delusion originated—by his artifices they were nourished! his representations influenced the astrologer's motions, his confidential agents removed the body of Che-vau-tau from the grave; by his hands the different

different scrolls had been written and placed. Well then might he tremble when conscience declared "this is thy work!"

The latter part of the internal monitor's representation was merely a sinner's spontaneous apprehension of judgment's approach, which the wicked always feel, when their nefarious designs are interrupted, for Fi-cham-tau awoke from his trance, and gradually evinced decided symptoms of consciousness.

He was carried to the cabin of his barge, on the lake, and transported home with all possible expedition. There care and attention of every description surrounded him; his wish appeared the universal law, and by none more than our tender-hearted Rodney, who watched

ed his pillow, and presented his medicines with truly filial assiduity.

Of this Fi-cham-tau was duly and gratefully sensible, for on his supposed son his eye almost invariably rested, and from his hand the bitterest poticn seemed suddenly impregnated with honeyed sweetness.

Days, weeks, and months, rolled over, and beheld the afflicted mandarin still in the same deplorable condition: he could walk occasionally, and converse at times with tolerable accuracy; but it was with *onc person,* and *on one subject: who* and *what* the person and subject were, I need scarcely say, for the reader will readily guess, and as spontaneously exclaim, " the imaginary Che-vau-tau."

The mandarin, however, though thus occupied

occupied with the contemplation of him whom he thought to be his son, forgot not, at the same time, the hand from whom he fancied that his blessing came; for scarcely a day went by, which witnessed not gifts and offerings of considerable value to the different shrines of Fo, and the universal Mother.

At the expiration of the sixth year from the time of Rodney's arrival in Cochin-China, the mandarin, Fi-cham-tau, rather suddenly departed; and never, perhaps, notwithstanding his eccentricities, was an individual more generally and genuinely lamented: his richer neighbours had lost one who vied not with them in any thing but a reciprocity of kindly acts; his indigent inferiors one from whom they never went

without

without relief; the ministers of his religion never could expect "to look upon his like again;" for years he had, as it were, kept their altars in a continual blaze: in truth, there was but one creature living who felt any sensation but that of sorrow for his death, and that was Rodney, who, although he had assuredly lost the kindest, most munificent of benefactors, could not overlook, in the event, the liberty which it granted him of seeking an immediate return to old England, of which he determined to take the very earliest advantage.

Being on the most familiar footing with Lin-ta, to him he unreservedly communicated his intention.

The priest raised not any objection, but

but advised caution and secrecy in his proceedings.

"For," observed he, "as in this country filial obedience does not terminate at a father's grave, witness the images of departed parents preserved in every family, and the worship paid to them; so the daughters of the deceased Fi-cham-tau, even in opposition to private opinion, will feel themselves in duty bound to acknowledge and support you as their brother; and, I almost believe, would resort to compulsory methods for detaining you here, if they at all suspected your design of quitting us. If, however, you are seriously anxious to return to Europe, it will not, I think, be difficult for me to get you privately on board a ship bound for Lisbon, for

such

such at this season of the year are often watering in the Bay of Turon, and into that neighbourhood I am going during the next moon."

Rodney repeated his firm determination of departing, with all convenient speed, for Great Britain.

At the next private conference, it was settled that Rodney should accompany his friend the priest on his excursion, and that, if a vessel should happen to be off the coast, whose captain would take him on board as a passenger, he should then bid adieu to the Asiatic shores.

Their journey towards the bay was delightful—could it indeed be otherwise to poor Rodney, when every step of it was carrying him nearer to that home after

after which his heart had so long and sincerely yearned?

For the moment the perils and dangers of a long voyage, the immeasurable leagues he had to traverse, the probable interruptions of his course, the disappointments which might await him, even when landed on his native coast, were all forgotten. Merciful arrangement of a wise Providence, which thus enables us to catch a transient sunbeam! Were future evils known to us, without a power of averting them, we should live but for "sadness and continual tears;" the storm, neither to be turned aside nor avoided, would wound even before it burst upon our head.

As if purposely to increase his happy buoyancy of spirits, the first object which met

met Rodney's eye, on looking down upon the expansive and beautiful bay, was a large European merchantman, whose boat was rowing towards the town of Turon. The vessel proved a Portuguese, and homeward bound; she was to sail with the next tide.

The captain, to whom, through his knowledge of the French language, he explained his singular situation, readily agreed to convey him to Lisbon; and for this, it is but justice to Lin-ta to acknowledge he was amply remunerated by presents of rice, vegetables, and poultry, which he sent on board in great abundance.

It had been Rodney's intention to have written an affectionate epistle of adieus to the daughters of the late mandarin, Fi-cham-tau; but such was the

hurry

hurry of his departure, that all was left to the explanation of the old priest, who was thus at liberty to account for the disappearance of his pupil in such manner as best suited himself and his purposes.

CHAPTER XI.

Fresh woes, oh, *youth* divine,
Fresh trials must be thine!
Ah! what must thou, Ladurlad, yet endure!
But let your heart be strong,
And bear ye bravely on,
For Providence is good, and virtue is secure.

SOUTHEY.

WITH rapture, which the most fluent and eloquent pen would fail in attempting to describe, did Rodney once more behold himself surrounded by European countenances—did he see the anchor weighed, and the canvas swelled by "favouring gales."

He

He was started for Europe—the goal, though distant, seemed in view, the wreath of victory within his reach; but the highest of authorities says, "the race is not always to the swift, any more than the battle to the strong."

Wind and weather proved particularly auspicious for many weeks. They called at St. Helena, that insulated rock, which now bounds the wanderings of him who once traversed Europe with his colossal strides.

Again they sailed—again the heavens smiled on their voyage—but, alas! even the heavens sometimes smile treacherously.

One evening, after the sun had sunk serenely to repose, the sky suddenly assumed an unusual darkness, the winds arose, and seemed to blow with equal

violence

violence from every point of the compass; the thunder roared incessantly, and one flash of lightning scarcely faded before another darted its flaming zigzag over the black sky; the sails which were up at the commencement of this dreadful tempest were shivered into ribbons, before they could be hauled down; the mainmast soon fell, and carried away with it the most useful part of the rigging.

For three whole days did this rage of elements continue with unabated fury. On the evening of the third day, as distinctly as the thick atmosphere would allow, they beheld an irregular outline of coast, towards which the wind, now blowing strongly landwards, was irresistibly impelling them.

At midnight the ship struck, and

with such force had she been been driven, that she appeared literally fixed upon a pointed ridge of rocks, and fixed immoveably, for the surge, which perpetually beat against her sides, made not the smallest change in her position.

Daylight came, but with it brought no cheering prospect; all around seemed interminable rock.

From the direction in which the wind had lately forced them, it was conjectured they had fallen on the inhospitable coast of Africa—Africa, so justly terrible to the shipwrecked, where no "offices of soft humanity" were to be expected—where slavery assumed its most terrific form.

A hazy morning by no means improved the prospect: to the shore, however,

ever, they must go—it was the only alternative from a watery grave, for the ship must, in the nature of things, break up in the course of a few tides. The boats were yet lashed safely to the decks—in them the crew flattered themselves they might reach *terra firma* in safety.

Out of three boats, two perished from the violence of the surge; the survivor was fortunately carried by the tide up a creek, which led to a natural dock, or basin, protected on all sides by rising banks of rock.

On board of this was Rodney, the almost brokenhearted Rodney, for he had heard and read of African captivity, and looked upon his present situation as certain death to his hopes of ever more visiting dear England.

Though it was broad daylight when the survivors of this unfortunate crew stepped from their boat, yet there was nothing appeared in a reviving form; all, on the one hand, was sterile rock—on the other, a boiling ocean, which never sent a wave towards them unaccompanied by the body of a drowned comrade, or some mournful proof that the ship was breaking to pieces.

A barrel of biscuit, and another of water, were all the provisions they had saved.

Shelter, more than the boat, which they had hauled ashore, afforded when turned bottom upwards, and supported by the oars, they had none.

As night came on, the storm, which had proved so fatal to them, subsided; and

and on the following morning the heavens and the sea alike assumed the most tranquil appearance.

But what were such appearances to wretches so situated! To sea they feared to venture in their little boat, without provisions—inland they could not go without a certainty of encountering enemies, " more fell than winds or waves."

Their only hope rested on the appearance of some passing vessels towards which the boat would enable them to row.

But no such method of escape occurred; once indeed a tantalizing distant sail gladdened their eyes: alas! it soon faded to a speck, and then vanished.

In almost any other situation they might have procured provisions of some

sort—here all was unbroken sterility—a blade of grass, or a drop of fresh water seemed not to be within reach.

To penetrate the country was a measure which would probably conduct to very terrible evils; yet being the only alternative from perishing by hunger, it must be resorted to.

"For surely," argued they with one consent, "the most savage barbarism can inflict nothing so dreadful as the slow lingering death which awaits us here?"

If they had perused the pathetic narratives of Riley and Adams, I doubt whether this would have been their opinion; but it is well nothing like them had fallen in their way, for then, perhaps, in a paroxysm of despair, they would have plunged into a watery grave,

grave, or dashed themselves in pieces on the rocks, rather than run the risk of being exposed to the brutality of the inhospitable Arab tribes.

On the morning which succeeded the determination of exploring, they commenced their progress over the rugged rocks, which extended their sharply-pointed, and in many instances lofty ridges, so far up the country, that many hours of painful labour were consumed in crossing them; and then—oh, what a prospect rewarded their severe toils!

It was indeed, we may emphatically declaim, "a barren and dry land, where no water was;" nor tree, nor plant, nor house, nor living thing appeared: far and wide stretched a long unbroken line of waste—unbroken perhaps I ought not

to call it, for its dull uniformity was frequently interrupted by moving sand raised on the wind, in such prodigious pillars as to partially obscure the face of the horizon.

"What shall we do?" whilst they gazed mournfully and hopelessly on this frightful wilderness, was the universal exclamation, and it remained long, long unanswered—for, where none can propose a plan, or point out a path, but what conducts to almost sure destruction, the tongue has no great facility of utterance.

As if some commanding power had cried "halt!" the whole party stood still on a rocky ledge, which formed the border of the dreary desert.

The pause, without the aid of words, decidedly

decidedly proclaimed a general opinion that procedure promised not any amelioration to their sufferings.

A consultation which ensued proved this to be the feeling of all; and it was agreed, at least for the night, to have recourse to the shelter afforded by their boat.

The next day was spent in surveying the rough scar on which their fine vessel had perished, and they felt amply recompensed for their fatigue by picking up a few barrels of salt beef, and the carcase of a pig, which though much bruised and wounded, still exhibited signs of life.

To this stock of provisions could they have added a supply of fresh water, they would unhesitatingly have ventured out to sea: the Canaries, they cal-

 culated;

culated, must be within a few days' sail, and thither (if they had not the good luck to be picked up by some passing ship) they flattered themselves they might be able to stretch their course.

Perhaps wells might be discovered by travelling a few leagues across the sands: to ascertain whether any such existed was agreed upon, and, to prevent disputes, lots were drawn who should be the explorers.

Rodney was of the number; and towards the dreary and unpromising wild they journeyed, bearing an almost empty cask, slung on cords, which the party alternately carried.

They began their walk in the afternoon, intending to rest a few hours of the night near to the boundary of the rocks, and thus be ready to start on

their

their wanderings in the desart with the first streak of daylight—an arrangement which promised them several miles march before the sun had risen to any considerable height.

The purposed place of halt was reached in safety, and there, under the projecting shelf of one of the highest rocks, Rodney and his two companions stretched out their weary limbs upon a sandy couch, alone protected from the chill midnight air by a shattered sail, which, besides answering this useful purpose by night, they intended, when supported by some broken oars, to convert into an awning against the noontide heat.

Languid and exhausted by their recent fatigues, their eyes soon closed under the acceptable pressure of sleep, that

alleviator of man's diversified load of misery.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XII.



Similes aliorum respice casus,
Mitius ista feres.

OVID.

"Weigh others' woes, and learn to bear thy own."

THE slumberings of this unfortunate triumvirate were not long unbroken, for sounds proclaiming their vicinage to human beings suddenly awoke them.

The noise was loud enough to prove that it arose from a great number of persons, but not sufficiently near to

reveal

reveal the language in which they spoke.

With cautious steps, and not a word spoken louder than a whisper, poor Rodney and his friends ascended the top of the rock under which they had been seeking the necessary relief of repose.

A scene was presented, neither likely to produce composure nor to forward the prosecution of their intended travels.

At no considerable distance they beheld a large company of the most hideous-looking wretches that can be conceived in human shape: the outline of their figures was, at the first, all that could be distinctly discerned; but, in a short time, the rising flames of an immense

mense fire clearly delineated their countenances and employment.

Several men in tattered garments were busy in erecting a tent; others, nearer to the light, held glittering instruments in their hands, probably spears, or hatchets, which they appeared to be sharpening.

Three or four women, surrounded by naked children and shaggy-coated dogs, from their continually approaching and retreating from the fire, they concluded to be dressing supper for their frightful associates.

In the back-ground of the sombre picture, only visible when the smoke was occasionally dispersed by the wind, reposed a considerable number of camels.

There

There was not a feature in this prospect which invited approach; on the contrary, every thing about it was repulsive—every thing declared that here no gentle rite of hospitality could be expected.

If such was the simultaneous feeling of the shipwrecked mariners on first discovering the barbarous group, how must it have been increased when they beheld two wretched, skeleton-like figures, whose faces bespoke them Europeans, drawing near the fire!—when they saw them repelled with the most savage ferocity by the females, who, not satisfied with striking and kicking, pursued them with burning firebrands! The men, too, as if apprehensive their women had not exercised sufficient severity,

verity, joined in the pursuit, and soon levelled their hapless victims with the ground.

The emotions excited in the breasts of Rodney and his companions at this terrible display of cruelty had not time to die away before they beheld two human beings approach slowly towards the rock over which they were looking.

It was too dark to distinguish them with any degree of accuracy; and so silently did they steal along, that probably they would have escaped observation, had it not been for the contrast between their black outline and the light-coloured sand.

As they came near, half-suppressed groans and lowly-muttered complaints were

were accurately heard. The language in which the latter were breathed was Portuguese.

There could be little doubt of the complainants' identity with the maltreated wretches just mentioned: had there been any, it would have soon vanished, for on approaching, their tale of woe became quite intelligible.

"Oh, Alvarez!" cried one of them, "oh, my partner in affliction! that we had died beneath the recently-inflicted blows of our cruel taskmasters! But surely nothing has the power of ending our lives! never will the measure of our woes be full!"

"Be patient, dear Miguel!" said a tremulous voice—"murmur not against the decrees of Him who knoweth what is

best

best and fittest for us: at his own good time he will visit us with mercy, and say to the scourge of chastisement, 'forbear thy stripe!'"

"You counsel well, and consistently with your spiritual profession," resumed the first speaker; "but yet you must allow 'tis difficult to bear misfortune such as ours without complaint. When," continued he, after a considerable pause, "when, during two long years of captivity, have we enjoyed the shelter of a roof against the chill damp breath of night, or the fierce heat of day? When have we partaken of a wholesome meal? when had enough to satisfy hunger, even of the loathsome food presented to us? When, in return for prompt obedience

to

to the most unreasonable commands, have we received aught but abuse and insult? Are not our almost naked bodies covered with the indelible marks of brutal violence? Has not our strength failed? can we walk, or use the most trifling exertion, without occasioning ourselves excruciating pain? and, in this wretched state, are we not sent, late as it is, to cross those tremendous rocks, to seek upon the shore for fuel? Oh, it would require more than a Job-like resignation to keep silence!"

"You paint but too truly," answered Alvarez, with a heavy sigh: "but yet, after all, what good end is answered by repining? it will not take one drop from our bitter cup!—nay, dear Miguel,

Miguel, it makes the draught more nauseous, for it deprives us of the consolatory reflection that, as becometh Christians of sound faith, we are cheerfully submitting ourselves to the Supreme Disposer of events!"

"And then," continued Miguel, as if he had not listened to the last address of his friend, "in addition to my own personal sufferings, have I not upon my mind the agonizing reflection of what my poor wife and children may be suffering at Lisbon in consequence of my detention here? Oh, Alvarez! it is—it is impossible to avoid complaining."

A burst of sorrow ensued, which so affected the overhearers of this moving dialogue, that they could neither resist audibly

audibly joining in it, nor immediately descending from their elevation, to mingle their tears with those of the unhappy strangers.

An explanation of each party's peculiar circumstances followed of course, and led to urgent entreaties from Alvarez and his brother in affliction, that as their new acquaintances possessed a boat, they should lose no time in making use of it.

"Any thing," said they, "excepting premeditated suicide will be preferable to remaining in this land of oppression. Before to-morrow's noon our brutal masters will have explored every recess of this rock, every winding of the shore, for hither they have come, for the express purpose of gleaning what harvest

vest the late tremendous storm has left them.

"If you remain here, you must unavoidably fall into their hands. Alternative there is none; and then what is to become of you? Some will be sold, as were the unhappy companions of our shipwreck—others will be retained to occupy the dreadful situations from which death must shortly release us.

"As to the want of water," continued Alvarez, "which you say has deterred you from braving the ocean, I think, if you will listen to my advice, it may be supplied: the empty cask which you brought hither, if broken up, we may carry back to our vile employers, as wreck collected on the coast. Such a

supply

supply of fuel may perhaps prolong their night's carousal; but that very circumstance will have a tendency to send them sleepy to their beds; and whilst their eyes are closed in forgetfulness, what will there be to prevent our conveying hither a skin of water from their abundant stock? We shall not, I should think, feel any qualms of conscience in this appropriation of another's goods to ourselves; but, on the contrary, regard the act as merely taking possession of a thing for which we have paid an enormous price."

Could such a proposal meet with any thing short of grateful acceptance? Could Rodney and his friends offer less to Alvarez and Miguel, in return for its accomplishment, than to enrol them

in the crew of the little vessel in which they were soon to leave the inhospitable shore of Africa.

The barrel was torn into staves, and soon after the unfortunate captives, bending from excessive weakness, under even so trivial a load, were beheld, "with tottering steps and slow," proceeding towards the tents of the Arabs.

The brightening flames speedily informed our friend Rodney's party that the barbarians had received their supply of firewood.

A loud and hideous yelling, and, from the rapid movement of figures round the fire, a wild dancing soon followed.

By degrees the sparkling light faded,

 and

and shortly the sound of human voices died entirely away.

END OF VOL. II.

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